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HER HUSBAND'S COUNTRY

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HER HUSBAND'S COUNTRY

Her Husband's Country

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MARCIA IN GERMANY"
by Sybil Spottis-woode.



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1914

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PART I

CHAPTER I

It was a stormy autumn evening, and the windows of Colne House rattled and shivered as the wind swept round them. The fires would have smoked also had not Mr. Thaile, with his comprehensive regard for his own comfort, insisted upon the newest well-grates and patent chimney cowl in all the rooms considered by him of any importance. He was occupied at present in examining by the fast-fading light a reputed drawing by Corot. Of course; it was as he anticipated not genuine. That came of ignorant outsiders imagining they could pick up bargains at sales. They were invariably swindled, and only succeeded in amassing a quantity of rubbish. He would like to see the man who could swindle him, Frobisher Thaile! And his eyes wandered proudly from the serried rows of rare editions to the proof engravings on the walls, and the fine specimens of Crown Derby, Worcester, and Wedgwood on the mantel shelf. To-morrow he would tell Mr. Sawyer that his Corot was not worth eighteenpence.

A sudden loud bang made him jump, and he glanced hastily out of the window. When, however, his eyes alighted upon a slight figure hurrying down the garden path, he transferred them impatiently back to the Corot. How inconsiderate everybody was! His wife was inconsiderate to be

out when he wanted to tell her of Sawyer's idiocy, and his daughter Patience was inconsiderate to bang the door—in fact, both were generally inconsiderate, and singularly lacking in the appreciation of genius.

Patience Thaile meanwhile had marched down the garden path with its dahlias and asters, its few sodden rosebuds, and the other derelicts of a rainy summer. At the end of the path was a gate which separated the garden from the fields beyond, and which commanded an uninterrupted view of open country. The sky was threatening and wild—fiery reds and oranges thrown into sharp relief by splashes of inky cloud—but the girl leaning against the gate, and gazing before her, hardly saw the beauties of the sunset. Indeed, though she possessed a trained eye for colour and form, nature had never made a very strong appeal to her. When she was happy, and life was progressing as she desired, a charming view, or a sunny sea certainly added to her enjoyment; but if things were going badly, and she was miserable, nature provided no consolation for her. The beauty of a stormy autumn sky in no way consoled her for the ugliness of a stormy family scene, and she derived no comfort from the realization of her own puny insignificance compared with the vastness of the earth and the heavens. In fact nature seemed only to accentuate the loneliness of certain human relationships. And to-night she felt particularly lonely, full of that rebellious hopelessness of youth which sees in an uncongenial present an inevitable permanency stretching drearily to the end of existence.

She propped her chin on her arm, and tears of

self-pity filled her eyes. What an alien she felt—infinitely more so than if she had been in the midst of total strangers. These people among whom she lived—bound to her by the closest ties of blood, possessing powers of proprietorship and authority over her, who claimed to have known her since her birth—really knew her less than the merest strangers. She did not stop to reflect whether any blame lay on her side, but, with the sweeping and hasty assurance of youth, sat in judgment and pitilessly condemned.

Her father she dismissed after a scornful mental summary. He was utterly selfish and eaten up with vanity. Her critical, intolerant young eyes saw through the shreds of a mock modesty with which he occasionally sought to cover his self-love; and for the type of "kindness" he showed his wife and daughter she conceded him no credit whatever. That he wished them always to be well-dressed and well turned out, that he disliked to see them over-work or over-tire themselves, arose, she felt convinced, from entirely selfish motives. He prided himself upon owning none but the best specimens of everything, and all his possessions must be in perfect condition. A haggard and wrinkled wife would annoy him as much as a chipped and imperfect Sévres cup; and to own a daughter lacking in freshness would be as great a discredit as to possess an engraving from a worn plate. Patience gave an impatient shrug. And then his work—this "great work" which she regarded as a wicked waste of time, and to which her mother clung with a stubborn belief which amazed her. What did it matter whether some ancient Phœnician inscrip-

tions were deciphered and translated or not? They could do mankind no possible good; and meanwhile she and her mother—particularly of course she—were wasting their lives in this deserted corner of the country. She wondered whether her mother really minded it very much. Whenever she had broken through her habitual suspicious reserve, and had complained bitterly of the loneliness, the dullness, the absence of all gaiety and companionship in her life, her mother had looked at her reproachfully, and had assured her that many—most—girls would be thankful to change with her, and she ought to be happy and grateful for such a beautiful home. And yet her mother—her pretty mother, with her lovely skin and finely-cut features—must feel the dreary uselessness of their life. Surely they ought to have been companions in their prison, sympathising, and helping to bear the common evil her father represented. Instead, they always seemed to be groping for one another in the dark, and in the dark to hurt themselves upon unexpected corners and sharp edges. For a sore finger her mother had instant sympathy and a cure, but for a sore heart she possessed apparently no remedy. Or perhaps she failed to diagnose the symptoms?

Patience Thaille was twenty, an age when one is apt to attribute the blame entirely to others and rarely to oneself. Her home had resolved itself into her prison, and her parents, gradually and unconsciously, into her gaolers. She felt that with them she and her actions and opinions were labelled, pigeonholed and ticketed; that she was judged by a preconceived idea formed perhaps years ago, when she was a chrysalis, unaware even of the ex-

istence of wings. Once when she had declared her detestation of pink as a colour, her mother had expressed surprise, and had reminded her that during a visit to Eastbourne she had cried because she might not have a pink sash. "But I was only nine then," Patience had declared desperately. "Because I once loved dolls and bread and treacle, am I to love them all my life?"

However, it is probable that Mrs. Thaile never fully realized that her child had left childhood behind, and this ceaseless beating of her wings against the bars was as painful to the mother as to the daughter, and far more incomprehensible.

"If only I could get away," Patience thought longingly; and the whole world beyond Colne and Colne House appeared to her one vast, unexploited paradise, waiting only for her to enjoy.

"Patience!" a voice called from the house, "Patience, where are you? You have forgotten to put out the Crown Derby dessert service."

The girl turned back with a frown. "When I have a house," she thought defiantly, "we'll eat off kitchen crockery, but we'll enjoy ourselves, and be young and gay, and we'll never come back to Colne House any more."

She hurried with averted face past the library window. Mr. Thaile was turning over a portfolio of drawings. He wanted to show Sawyer what a genuine Corot looked like, and to demonstrate to him how futile it was for an ignorant amateur to attempt to pick up bargains.

CHAPTER II

"I WAS extremely sorry I could not attend the sale," Sir Henry Wane observed, chasing a preserved fruit over the painted figures on his plate. "I hear there were some quite extraordinary ivories and enamels."

"Which fetched extraordinary prices," Mr. Thaile interposed. "Nowadays, when everybody collects, only American millionaires can afford to buy the good things going. In my young days, when nobody understood anything about it, I was able to pick up treasures for a mere song." He leant back in his high carved chair, and gazed complacently down the table, with its fine specimens of old china and silver. In his eyes each one appeared a testimonial to his knowledge and astuteness, and in this way he was able constantly to drink flattery from the inanimate objects around him. For instance, the salt cellars, dating from the First Empire, reminded him whenever he looked at them of his extraordinary powers of observation in detecting them behind a heap of rubbish at a country sale; and the magnificent pair of chased candlesticks were a permanent tribute to his diplomacy and ready wit in getting the best of a transaction. "No," he continued, passing a hand over his long hair, "it is not at such places that we may hope to acquire additions to our collections. It is

practically impossible nowadays for the man of ordinary means to get through the ring of dealers who always attend such sales."

Mr. Lawrence Penny, who had taken Patience in to dinner, and who had listened intently to Mr. Thaile's remarks, now turned to his companion with a belated attempt at conversation. He was bald, and had short-sighted eyes, a long, thin nose, and no chin, which gave him the appearance of some dreary and helpless bird. His tie rose up to the top of his collar, and he had a kink in the middle of his shirt front. He might have been any age from thirty to fifty, and he had made a name for himself—or so he imagined—by a most illuminating pamphlet upon the Louvre Rubenses. To judge from his appearance it might have been supposed that one glance at these pictures would have alarmed and horrified him.

"I hear you are assisting Mr. Thaile to catalogue his Little Masters," he observed in his low depressing voice. "I am sure it is a great privilege."

"For him or for me?" Patience demanded pertly.

Mr. Penny looked a shade more mournful and helpless. "I mean it is a great advantage to be able to educate one's eye and one's taste under the supervision of such a unique authority as your father," he explained laboriously.

How owlsh and pedantic he looked, Patience thought irritably. "As a matter of fact I should find the pictures in Christmas Numbers far more cheerful and pleasant than the Little Masters," she declared with defiant flippancy.

Mr. Penny shivered slightly and screwed up his

short-sighted eyes, while he racked his brain for some reply which would show Miss Thaile how wrong she was without stinging her into further extravagances. Though, however, he possessed quite an adequate estimation of his own value, it imparted to him no glibness of tongue, and Patience had already turned to her neighbour on the other side before he had formulated a suitable response.

Mr. Sawyer was an exceedingly clever and capable barrister; he was passionately fond of pictures and painting, but was as execrable an artist as he was an excellent advocate. Patience, who wanted him to tell her about a murder case which he had defended very brilliantly, found herself headed back upon Art every time.

"I hear that this door and the overmantel are Grinling Gibbons," he said. "How did your father manage to pick them up?"

"Oh, you mustn't ask me; it would be quite impossible if two members of the family told the anecdotes," she replied rather ungraciously. "But why don't you ask him?" she added. "He will be overjoyed to find someone who hasn't heard the story."

Mr. Thaile had already caught the direction of his guest's eye, and was leaning across the table. "Rather fine specimens, aren't they? Practically impossible to pick up, especially for a poor man like myself. A sheer piece of luck on my part." And he assumed that depreciating air which Patience thought more conceited than a blatant swagger.

"Oh, do tell us how you got them. Your anec-

dotes are always so amusing," Lady Wane exclaimed breathlessly. She had just succeeded in retrieving her gloves, handkerchief, and napkin from under the table. She invariably left half her possessions there, and on her return home accused her husband bitterly of having lost them.

"I am afraid this little tale will disappoint you," Mr. Thaile said modestly, leaning forward and preparing for the conversational innings he was always waiting to secure—if he said, "the conversation was very interesting and enjoyable," this might be translated as meaning, "I held forth the whole time, and all the table listened to me."—"Before I tell you of the manner in which I secured these carvings, I must mention a rather humorous little incident which occurred the other day in connection with them"—ever since Patience could remember, this "humorous little incident" had occurred "the other day."—"I was introduced by special request to an attractive Yankee Countess who was 'collecting culture.' She ingenuously informed me she had had little education, but she possessed wonderful powers of assimilation. Apparently she went about collecting odd pieces of information in much the same way as if they were odd pieces of stuff for a patchwork quilt, and pieced them together with about as much symmetry and good taste. However, she was kind enough to inform me that she had heard a great deal about my work and collections, and begged me to tell her some of my anecdotes about the latter."

"Indeed, very interesting," Mrs. Sawyer murmured absent-mindedly. She was a great talker herself, and felt defrauded because this large share

of the conversation had been snatched by someone else. Mr. Thaile, knowing her proclivities, did not allow himself the effective pauses with which he usually interspersed his stories, but continued rather hastily, "Well, I told her my little adventure with these Grinling Gibbons carvings, and she appeared much interested, and said, 'My! how turribly hard he must have worked to have done all that carving as well.' I did not understand her remark until later, when Professor Settle, the historian, came up to me chuckling with laughter. Apparently the little Yankee Countess had said to him, 'Why, Professor, we may hustle some in Amurrica, but I guess it's a pic-nic compared with the way you hustle in Europe. When I think of Mr. Gibbon writing that turrible long history, and then, as if he'd gotten too much spare time, going and carving all the churches and country houses in England as well—wall, it makes me just giddy!'"

Amid the applause which greeted this recital, Patience leant back wearily in her chair. How stupid it was—it grew sillier every time. There is nothing so irritating, she reflected, as a person devoid of imitative faculties who will always attempt to mimic others. Her father's American, Scotch, or Irish stories were those she dreaded most. Had it not been for the "Mys," "Hoots," and "Begor-rah," she thought nobody could distinguish one from the other. And yet everybody else seemed quite amused and pleased. Mrs. Sawyer had at last got in her oar, and had launched forth upon a rambling account of her latest mission. Lady Wane was begging Mr. Thaile to use his influence with Henry—"You have so much in-

fluence with everyone"—to prevent Henry from buying a Ruysdael, upon which he had set his heart. "We really can't afford it," she complained pathetically. "I must go to Court next year, and we must have a new car—our old one is only fit for the scrap heap, and as I always say to Henry, 'First the necessities of life, then the luxuries, if we have any money over for them.'"

Mr. Sawyer was propounding a new theory of impressionist painting to Lawrence Penny, who looked more drearily unresponsive than ever, and fidgeted with his wineglass, while he tried to find words to express his entire disapproval of the idea.

Mrs. Thaile was deep in a discussion with Sir Henry Wane on the subject of servants' insurances, and was recounting to him all the terrible experiences she and her friends had met with. "They had to pension his wife and children because he fell down and cracked his head when he was unlawfully getting some beer," she was saying impressively.

Yes, they all had interests in common, they were all enjoying themselves, only she, Patience Thaile, sat apart, an alien in their midst, miserable and lonely, and bored to the verge of tears. Did nobody realize that she was young, that she longed for amusement, gaiety, laughter, the companionship of youth? Had all these people round her never been young themselves, or had they quite forgotten what it felt like? Yes, of course, they had had their day, and their fling; had danced, flirted, made merry, and now were content to settle down to the jog-trot of middle-age. But she was being cheated of it all; she was seeing the pre-

cious time fly past, sitting with bound hands, impotent to seize her rightful share of pleasure. Soon, very soon, it would be too late, and she would be middle-aged also, and would have missed everything her heart longed for. Her eyes wandered over the table; the soft lights, the delicate trails of flowers, the subdued glint of silver and crystal, the low hum of voices—all seemed a dream, no, a nightmare, from which she felt she must rouse herself with a scream and a struggle. From the peacock-coloured walls, a Van Dyck lady in slashed sleeves and over-low bodice, looked down with haughty contempt upon her ineffectual sister of to-day, who let the pleasures she had known so well slip through weak fingers; and a dainty little Greuze head, with parted lips and languorous eyes, smiled meaningly. They had all lived, and tasted the wonderful, strange joys which the world outside offers to the young and the attractive. Only she—Patience Thaile—was denied these, and condemned to eat away her heart and waste her youth among dry, tedious, middle-aged people, who admired a hideous old woman in a print, more than a charming young girl in the flesh.

Mrs. Thaile collected eyes, and the ladies retired to the drawing-room. It was a large room—heavily for dancing, Patience had often thought—and the decoration and furnishing had been planned with such care that it appeared neither bare nor overcrowded.

Mrs. Sawyer had settled herself in a corner of the deep chintz-covered sofa, and was sipping her coffee with the air of unruffled self-satisfaction which always characterised her. The sequins on

her black satin gown were not harder or blacker than her own eyes, and the huge diamond star on her plump white neck rose and fell with clock-work regularity. She was very proud of her shoulders, and gave everyone ample opportunity to admire them. "Have you heard Dr. Alister MacDougal preach upon the Lulubura Mission? Such an eloquent, sincere preacher he is. I assure you my hands are full with the Luluburans, a sewing class for the natives of Koko Por, drawing-room meetings——"

"I wonder if we are going to have a list of her charities," Patience thought petulantly; and she almost hated Mrs. Sawyer's complacent face, and arrogant assumption that everyone was as interested in her affairs as she was herself.

Lady Wane was toasting her daintily-shod little feet upon the Empire fender. She had an extraordinarily youthful figure—always clad in the latest fashions—and a reproachfully pathetic air, as if to say, "Life has disappointed but not embittered me."

"Men are so very selfish," she remarked plaintively, "Henry has just had a perfect debauch at Sothebys, and he knows quite well I must have a new set of furs this winter. Women thank Heaven if their husbands don't drink or bet, but I think they should thank Heaven if they don't collect."

Mrs. Thaile gave an automatic little smile, which she divided impartially between her two guests. Sir Henry was known to be the most generous and considerate of husbands, therefore his wife could grumble about him in public; Mr. Thaile was self-

ish and bad-tempered, but nobody had ever heard a word of complaint pass Mrs. Thaile's lips.

Patience eyed her mother critically; undoubtedly she was a handsome woman, but there was something severe and unapproachable in her face, or so her daughter thought, as she relegated her afresh to the outer courts of her confidence, where the veriest strangers might be admitted.

"Will you be going up to Town this winter, Miss Thaile?" Lady Wane asked, holding one little foot to the blaze.

"I hope when I am her age I shall have such nice ankles and petticoats," Patience thought, as she answered, "Of course I should love to, but equally of course my parents won't hear of it. I love town and hate the country."

"Really? I am just as happy at Wane Hall as I am in Pont Street."

"Ah, but that is different. You have plenty of friends," Patience interposed eagerly.

"One has always plenty of friends if one has a motor," Lady Wane said in her soft voice. "It is wonderful to see the effect a new car has on one's character. It brings out so many delightful qualities that everybody is anxious to be friendly. I have quite a circle of such friends, especially round about Wane Hall. I call them my 'Petrol Parasites.' It's rather a nice name, don't you think?" she added in gentle appeal.

"I shouldn't mind anything in the least if I had a motor, and could get out into the world," Patience cried. She was so full of herself and her own grievances that everything she saw or heard was coloured by them. The people she met here

were interesting merely from the speculative standpoint: have they had the pleasures and opportunities denied me?

"You should bring your daughter up to Town for a season," Lady Wane said, turning to her hostess. "She has just been telling me she hates the country."

"I am afraid my daughter is rather difficult to please," Mrs. Thaile replied in what Patience called her "iced-water" voice. "Besides, she knows quite well we cannot afford such extravagances," she added in a tone of finality.

Lady Wane's delicate eyebrows lifted slightly, and Patience flushed an angry red: both were thinking of the Claude and the two Constables, which Mr. Thaile had just purchased.

"Well, perhaps you could come up for the inside of a week, and do some theatres and concerts?" Lady Wane suggested.

Mrs. Thaile shook her head stiffly. "Quite impossible. My husband hates London, and does not like our being away. Besides, we are not rich, and Patience knows quite well we cannot throw our money away on unnecessary things."

"Yes, it is terrible the way money is squandered considering the thousands of missions which are crying out for funds," Mrs. Sawyer chimed in. She felt she had been silent far too long, and was determined to keep a firm hold upon the conversation for the rest of the evening. "The accounts of the habits and customs of the savages in Africa and China are positively amazing. I only wish I had some of Dr. Alister MacDougal's pamphlets here so that I could read them to you. He has ex-

traordinary descriptive powers. In the last but one he says——”

Luckily at this juncture there was a sound of voices, and the door opened to admit the men. Sir Henry Wane, tall, thin, immaculate, towered above Mr. Thaile's rather slack, stooping figure. “He is soft and flabby and has never done a stroke of real work in his life,” Patience thought contemptuously, as she compared him with the other, ex-soldier and explorer, who had worked for his country, instead of frittering away his life—and other people's as well—over a heap of useless old rubbish.

Mr. Penny looked hopelessly despondent: he had been unable to extricate himself from Mr. Sawyer's impressionistic onslaught, and was irritably conscious that, owing to his unreadiness of speech, Sawyer thought he was a convert.

“Well, have the ladies settled the affairs of the universe?” Mr. Thaile inquired with that trite jocularity he frequently assumed in speaking to the opposite sex. “Sir Henry is most anxious to see my Fragonards, so we are going to my den. Of course if the ladies will honour us with their presence we shall be delighted.”

Lady Wane rose to her feet: she felt even Fragonard would be preferable to the Reverend Alister MacDougal, while Mrs. Sawyer thought Sir Henry would prove a more appreciative listener than his wife or Mrs. Thaile. The latter had already fetched the catalogues, and the party trooped out of the room. Only Mr. Lawrence Penny lingered behind and cast a despondently longing glance at the fireplace. Patience had flung herself into one of the deep chintz-covered chairs, and was reading—not a

book on Art or Literature, but a yellow-backed French novel. The fire shone on her fair hair and on a piece of white neck and shoulder.

Mr. Penny sighed gloomily, hesitated, took a step forward, then retreated hastily and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER III

It was Sunday afternoon. Lady Wane was resting in her room, Mrs. Sawyer was writing circulars for her next mission meeting, and the remainder of the party were looking through the collection of enamels in the library.

Patience had retired to her quarters at the top of the house. Here she had a bedroom and a sitting-room arranged entirely according to her own taste, where she was practically free from parental intrusions.

Extended on a wicker sofa, she was reading *Mensonges* and smoking a cigarette. The fire was blazing merrily, and in front of it her Airedale terrier Satan lay stretched out, snoring gently.

She looked up from the pages of her book. Surely something had scratched very softly at the door. It certainly could not be one of the guests, though she had given a general invitation to them to visit her sanctum if they cared to do so. They were, however, all deep in the collections; besides it was such a very gentle little tap. She had decided that it must be an hallucination, when it occurred again a trifle louder, and on calling out "Come in!" the door opened wide enough to admit the head of Mr. Lawrence Penny.

"Am I disturbing you, Miss Thaile?" he asked, peering round the crack, and looking more like a

nervously-inquiring bird than ever. "You said we might visit your domain, so I have taken the liberty of accepting your kind invitation."

Patience gave a half-impatient, half-amused laugh, and flung her cigarette into the fire. "Of course, I am delighted to see you, Mr. Penny," she said. "Bring up a chair and make yourself comfortable. I believe you are too well brought up to smoke?"

"Thank you, I have never smoked in my life," Mr. Penny observed, eyeing doubtfully the cigarette-end smouldering in the fender. He looked so disheartened, either at his own virtue or at her back-slidings, that she hastened to change the subject. "You know they are looking at collections in the library? Wouldn't you like to join them?"

He roused himself with an effort, and crossed his legs uncomfortably. To her surprise Patience noticed that he actually had on a pair of fancy socks. "No, I would far prefer to be up here," he said; then afraid lest this might sound too compromising, he added hurriedly, "You have made the room very nice indeed. These mignonette-coloured walls are exactly the shade to show up the engravings, and this soft, plain carpet tones in admirably. And the boldness of grouping these pieces of rough pottery together, and getting the splash of peacocks, yellows, and greens—only an artist's eye could have achieved that. And the pictures are just as I should have hung them myself."

"I am much flattered that it meets with your approval," Patience replied solemnly. "It is a great compliment coming from such a celebrated author and Art critic as yourself."

A blush of pleasure spread over Mr. Penny's sallow countenance, momentarily chasing its habitual vague gloom.

"If I might believe that you mean that, Miss Thaile," he said, suspicion and gratification battling in his voice, "I should like to feel"—here he looked rather wildly round the room—"I should like to feel that my opinion is of value to you."

Patience glanced at him in surprise. This creature, whose sex she had never even considered, and whom she certainly never imagined thought of her with anything except disapproval, was getting quite emotional.

"There is something about you that has always reminded me of Botticelli's *Primavera*," he murmured sadly.

"I hope you don't think my figure is like Botticelli's ladies," Patience interposed, glancing up under her eyelashes. A flirtation with this surprising creature would be quite a good way of passing the afternoon.

Mr. Penny's eyes were now fixed in a determined stare upon herself. "No, you have the figure of a Gainsborough or a Romney," he muttered.

Patience sat up slightly, dangled one foot over the edge of the sofa, and smiled at him. Really he was not half so dull and stupid as she had imagined. "I am afraid you are paying me compliments," she observed innocently.

There was a short pause, then Lawrence Penny seized his courage in both hands and plunged. "I am not paying you compliments, I—I love you!" He looked at her drearily, then, feeling that he must supplement his statement, hurried on. "I

could make you comfortable"—"as if he were an hotel or a boarding-house," Patience reflected—"I have twelve hundred a year, and when my uncle dies I shall come in for more, and a place in Dorsetshire. And then my name is not altogether unknown—my book made a considerable stir." He brightened visibly at the thought of his literary and artistic triumphs, which he was so generously asking her to share.

Patience had thrown aside her flippancy, and was listening quite seriously. Was this, perhaps, the gate into the world for which she had been longing and searching so passionately? After all, twelve hundred a year and London to start with, backed by the certainty of a lot more and a country house to follow—and freedom from the prison walls of Colne House, and the arbitrary authority of her parents—were not these the things she had declared desirable above all else? Then her eyes fell upon Mr. Lawrence Penny. After the tremendous effort, he had sunk together upon his chair, and his short-sighted eyes were bent upon the carpet. No, there were other things she longed for even more than material gain—love, light, gaiety, passion—and these things Mr. Lawrence Penny could certainly not give her. But she was curious, like all young things and most old ones, and she wanted to probe this baffling specimen of his sex, who had suddenly become interesting because of his admiration of her.

"I should like to know why you want to marry me," she said. "We have nothing in common."

He raised his eyes with an effort, and fixed them upon the girl. He, the studious, earnest scholar,

did not wish to own—or perhaps he was only semi-conscious of the fact—that he had fallen in love with attractive youthfulness, with an apple-blossom complexion and a white neck, with an inviting red mouth, and a lithe young figure. He, who for the greater portion of his life had taken no more interest in women than in caterpillars, and had been completely self-sufficient and self-satisfied with his circumscribed existence and the imagined importance of his work—had fallen as hopeless a victim to the charms of the flesh as the most susceptible young Lothario.

“You must not say we have nothing in common,” he stammered, trying to think of some other reasons for matrimony, besides the bewilderingly insistent ones upon which his eyes were fixed. “Despite all you say, I know you are very artistic. One has only to look round this room to see that.” He spoke with a kind of desperate animation, as if he feared the works would have run down before he had finished his say. “We would make our house a gem of artistic comfort, and it would doubtless soon become a little centre of Culture and Art. You would inspire me and help me with my work and my collections, and I feel sure I could achieve even more than I have been able to in the past.” The gloomy Mr. Penny had never risen to such giddy heights of optimism before.

What a fool she had been to contemplate, even for one instant, matrimony with such a man. It would mean breaking through the doors of one prison to find herself caged in another far smaller and more stifling—imprisonment for life. True, she would have wrenched herself free from the un-

congenial society of her parents, and the tedious cataloguing of her father's treasures, but these were, after all, only limited and temporary evils. She would be exchanging them for a companionship equally uncongenial, and at the same time terrifyingly intimate and permanent, and for an endless existence of cataloguing and listening to dreary dissertations.

"I don't think we should suit one another in the least," she exclaimed. "I am flippant and superficial, and often do and say the wildest things which I don't mean at all."

"Ah, yes, such as the remark you made yesterday about preferring common newspaper prints to the Little Masters," he interposed, anxious to demonstrate that he really understood her. "But you must not imagine that I cannot understand a joke"; and he began drearily to wonder whether he ought to have attempted his proposal in a lighter vein. These pretty young things were often very inconsequent and flighty, he knew, but matrimony with him would soon impart the depth and seriousness lacking at present.

"That remark I made from the bottom of my heart!" she cried impatiently. "I assure you I often get so satiated and wearied with everything here, with this worship of old rarities, with this sacrificing of everything and everybody for the attainment of them, with the everlasting cant about pieces of canvas or musty books—that I feel I only want to get away from it all, to live in the simplest of surroundings, with people who don't know a Botticelli from a Burne-Jones."

The words had poured from Patience with such

heated rapidity that Mr. Lawrence Penny was completely bewildered, and could only stare at her helplessly with his short-sighted eyes. She had jumped up and was pacing excitedly up and down the room.

"I am positively sick of the name of Art," she declared vehemently. "People who are so mad on the subject shouldn't marry, or anyhow shouldn't have children. I have been unhesitatingly sacrificed to my father's collections—all the money that ought to have been spent on me has been squandered on them." She paused breathless before the amazed Mr. Penny, her eyes shining, the colour burning in her cheeks, everything else forgotten but her grievances, and the impelling desire to unburden herself of them.

"Dear, dear," Mr. Penny murmured faintly. "Don't you take rather a violent view of the case?"

"I wouldn't have told you what I think and feel, if you hadn't asked me to share an existence which would have suited me about as badly as the one here. Do you know what I want?" The girl had planted herself in front of the fire, and the flames cast a ruddy glow on her fair hair, and on the clinging folds of her gown, "I want to be with people who are young—everybody here is as old as Methuselah—I want to enjoy myself, to laugh and sing and be gay, to talk nonsense that nobody minds, to joke and dance and flirt——"

Mr. Penny fidgeted uncomfortably, and half rose from his chair, but Patience continued unabashed, "And do you know what the man must be like whom I shall love?"—Mr. Penny rose to his feet.—"He must be young and strong and gay.

I don't mind if he doesn't even know what a mezzotint is, or if he thinks kitchen crockery preferable to Crown Derby, but he must make love to me with passion, and laughter and kisses, and must teach me at last what living really means."

She stopped abruptly, already repenting her uncontrolled outburst. Mr. Penny had retreated to the door, where he stood with his hand on the knob.

"I see it has been a mistake," he said with glum severity, "I could certainly not give you what you demand." And with a stiff little bow he fumbled his way out of the room.

Patience flung herself on to the sofa. "Of the two, I have made the greater fool of myself," she reflected. "But to become Mrs. Penny—no, I think I am worth more than that!"

CHAPTER IV

IN a little village about two miles distant from Colne House, there resided a spinster aunt of Mrs. Thaile's, a Miss Cordelia Duff. She owned a small house and a large garden, the latter full of beautiful old trees, the former of ramshackle old furniture.

Miss Duff herself was a curious mixture. She had an old body and a young mind, and her ideas were as surprisingly modern as her clothes were grotesquely old-fashioned.

When things were going particularly badly at home, Patience would call Satan, and together the two would cross the intervening fields, and burst in upon Miss Cordelia. She appeared invariably glad to see them, and would listen with dispassionate interest while Patience poured forth her grievances, before she intervened with some caustic comment or shrewd advice. She never assumed the superior omniscient manner of the old towards the ignorant young: Patience was treated on an entire equality, and therefore took the hard hits her aunt sometimes dealt her, in perfect good part.

Though before strangers and acquaintances Miss Duff maintained a rigid reserve with regard to family matters, in the family itself she was extremely outspoken. It was sheer hysteria, she considered, to pretend that one's relatives were necessarily para-

gons; and she criticised hers with a humorous frankness, which the relatives themselves resented bitterly.

Mr. Thaile detested her, and nothing would induce him to cross her threshold. She had stripped him of his mock humility, exposed his vanities and affectations, and chastised him with her sharp tongue for his selfish treatment of his wife and daughter. At their last encounter she had attacked him scornfully. "You call yourself a Liberal, a Freethinker, and Freetrader! Why, you are the most bigoted, narrow-minded, arbitrary creature imaginable! You declare that every person should have the right to believe and think as he pleases, but you make life intolerable if your family does not think exactly as you do. The liberty of the individual is the creed of you and your party, yet the beings you have in your power you fetter and bully. Everybody, you declare, should have the right to enter the world's market, untaxed and unhampered, only your own family you shut behind walls, and forbid to utilise the gifts Nature has given them."

Mr. Thaile had turned on his heel and had left the house, never to enter it again. "The woman is mad," he had said, "all unmarried women get queer. Matrimony is the only thing that keeps women at all sane."

On the Monday following Mr. Penny's proposal, things had gone specially wrong with Patience Thaile, and she determined to seize the first opportunity to rush across to her Aunt Cordelia, and pour out her woes into that old lady's receptive ear.

Before the guests left for London, there was just enough time to look through the collection of Chinese ivories. Everybody was clustered round Mr. Thaile, who was monopolising the general attention in the manner so congenial to him. Only Patience stood apart from the rest, her foot on the fender, her eyes fixed moodily upon the flames.

"You don't care for art?" a pleasant voice asked, and raising her eyes, she saw Sir Henry Wane looking down at her.

"He is the only sympathetic person here," she thought, scanning his kind face, weather-beaten and capable. "Of course I like beautiful things, but I have grown to hate the collections," she admitted confidentially. "I can't help it when I see the effect they have on people's characters and lives."

Sir Henry smiled. "So you think collecting so very demoralising?"

"I think it is an excellent thing to collect postage stamps, or fossils, or anything in one's spare time. What I think so awful is when collecting becomes the sole *raison d'être* of existence, when one has no work, no employment, no interests outside."

"You surely take rather a biased view of the matter," Sir Henry replied. "I am exceedingly keen on collecting myself, but I have not yet found that it has touched my other interests."

"Ah, you are different. You are a soldier, and have done hard, dangerous, vital work for your country. Now you have earned your leisure and your recreation. You could not grow flabby and helpless and small like the men who have never roughed it or known real hardship in their lives."

"But perhaps they work in a different way.

Many of them despise soldiers, and consider them useless encumbrances."

"Of course they do, because in their heart of hearts they are jealous of the men who stand for the defence and security of our empire in every corner of the globe, and face danger as naturally as we do our dinner."

"But everybody can't lead that sort of life," Sir Henry interposed.

"No, but everyone can work, and do something useful in the world, something which benefits the rest of mankind, if even a very little. Why, the man who sweeps the chimneys does more for the good of the community than the man who spends the whole of his life pottering about among antiquities."

Patience stopped abruptly as if a jet of cold water had suddenly fallen on her eloquence. She found speech as heady as champagne, and if she once gave her tongue rein it usually carried her much farther than she had intended. Now she looked round rather guiltily, but everyone was deeply immersed—or pretended to be—in the ivories Mr. Thaile was elaborately describing, and only her own conscience accused her. She knew well from past experience that when the house had relapsed again into its habitual deserted, dreary silence, she would be left alone with her solitude and her regrets—regrets for many of the things she had left unsaid, and for most of those she had said, "I am neither good enough nor bad enough," she reflected bitterly, "I am not good enough to make the best of things and hold my tongue, and not bad enough to disregard my heart and my conscience."

Indeed she was often uneasily aware of a sense of failure, of lost opportunities. Inexorably intolerant of that type of stupidity to which she was not prone, she sometimes vaguely apprehended that there might be other forms of stupidity from which she was by no means exempt. A silly question, a slow retort, a blundering excuse, or a lack of humour, she would scornfully condemn; but at the same time she failed to realize—except in fleeting glimpses—the blundering short-sightedness of sacrificing chances to ill-temper, or friends to a sharp tongue. Thoroughly dissatisfied and lonely, every event, every new arrival, presented a possible “opportunity” to her; and when they all passed, leaving her position unchanged, she drowned a moody self-criticism of her own actions and behaviour in a passionate resentment against the bonds which held her a prisoner in surroundings and circumstances calculated to show her at her worst.

She watched gloomily the last guest drive off in the station fly—the horse and carriage had been sold when Mr. Thaile purchased two large Buhl cabinets, a Worcester dessert service, and a huge Jacobean chest, which blocked up half the hall—then she climbed to her room, flung on her outdoor clothes, whistled to Satan, and flew downstairs three steps at a time.

As she passed the library door, she heard her father's voice raised in petulant anger: “You always do the wrong thing, Agnes, but of course, as it's for me, you don't take the slightest trouble. I should like to know how many husbands would put up with annoyances and neglect in the way I do? I constantly consult you and your taste, and defer

to your opinion in every way—have you forgotten the Hogarth I gave up buying because you objected to the subject?—and yet you do not consider my feelings in the least.”

Then Mrs. Thaile's gentle reply: “I am so sorry, dear, Mary must have moved the blotter when she was dusting.”

But though Mr. Thaile's loud, unmollified retort followed Patience down the garden path, she was too absorbed in her own troubles to feel pity for her harassed mother, and slamming the garden gate behind her, she ran across the sopping fields in the direction of Miss Duff's house.

CHAPTER V

"It is a pity that with me for a safety-valve, you must still pour out your grievances indiscriminately," Miss Duff observed reflectively. Patience had stopped to take breath after a rapid and rather incoherent recital of her experiences and afflictions of the last two days. "Besides the fact that it is bad form, it is so wearying for other people," Miss Duff continued in her dispassionate manner, "it probably bores them just as much to listen to your complaints as it bores you to listen to your father's anecdotes."

Patience fidgeted uneasily with the bracelets on her wrist, but she attempted no retort, and took her aunt's sarcastic rebuff quite meekly. Miss Cordelia always seemed to find out the things about which her conscience was pricking her most persistently, and if attacked for a fault which she recognised, she was generous enough to accept the blame.

"Yes," she admitted after a pause, "it was cadish of me to speak to that absurd Penny and to Sir Henry as I did. I don't know what was the matter with me, but I have been feeling particularly rampageous and miserable lately. It seems so hopeless, as if I should never get out of this place until I am too old to care any longer."

Miss Duff smiled. "I believe if you asked for

the moon, you would not only expect to get it, but you would be hurt and surprised if it did not immediately drop at your feet. There never was anyone as inappropriately named as you. But how could one expect," she added half to herself, "that your poor dear mother should apprehend the ultimate character of a newly-born baby, when she cannot even understand the characters of the grown-up people around her?"

"That's just it," Patience exclaimed eagerly. "Mother has never understood me. I get on very well indeed with other people, but she always seems to rub me up the wrong way."

"I suppose you have not considered that you may never have been half as nice to her as you are to these other people?" Miss Duff demanded.

"I have tried all I can," Patience declared; "but I think she finds it impossible to realize that I have a very marked individuality of my own."

"In fact that you are quite unique," Miss Duff said. "I am convinced that during the many hours you have so profitably spent in brooding upon your misfortunes and injustices, you have come to the conclusion that no girl was ever so badly treated as yourself, whereas there are dozens of cases precisely similar to yours."

"But that doesn't make it any easier for me to bear," Patience interrupted.

"No, but the difference is that in many of the cases when a girl finds her parents uncongenial, and her home-life unhappy, she has to put up with it, to cut her coat according to her cloth, and to make the best of things, whereas you—you are going to have your cage door opened, and the oppor-

tunity given you to fly out, and discover whether the world is as delectable as you imagine."

Patience looked up with bewildered, startled eyes into her aunt's face. The revulsion of suddenly awakened hope made her voice husky as she demanded: "Are we going to leave Colne House, or what is going to happen?"

"If instead of rushing wildly off, you had stopped to speak with your mother, you might have known by now," Miss Duff observed drily, "She would probably have told you that for the last few weeks we have been in correspondence with friends of Aunt Charlotte's, who have asked you to stay with them and go out with their daughter, who is also an only child."

"Where do they live? In London?" Patience had jumped to her feet, all traces of discontent and ennui wiped from her fresh young face.

"No, they are German friends. They have asked you to stop with them in Germany."

"Oh—h," said Patience slowly. She was conjuring up a vision of her German governesses, of their ill-fitting clothes, and their elementary notions of cleanliness; and with them she associated the idea of fat untidy men, bearded and spectacled, living upon beer and *Sauerkraut*—learned, perhaps, but thoroughly unprepossessing and unattractive.

"Charlotte's friend is married to an officer in the German Army, and though the town they live in is small, it has a fairly big garrison, and I should imagine you would have plenty of distractions."

"Ah," said Patience, visibly brightening, "I am sure it would be very interesting. I should like to see what life is like in another country. It

will be instructive and amusing and—it won't be Colne."

"Its chief attraction of course," Miss Duff said rather sourly. "As you know, I would, if possible, give to each individual the chance to shape his own life according to his temperament and capabilities, and therefore I am thankful when every young thing is set free to try its own wings. But I must own I am a little afraid for you, my dear Patience, on this your first flight. You are so hasty, and so confident that your judgment about men and things is always correct."

But Patience, with radiant face and shining eyes, was hastily drawing on her gloves. "Don't croak, dearest Aunt Cordelia, I can feel that my luck has turned. The past is a horrid nightmare that I shall forget, and in the future I shall be happy, and good, and amiable—a reformed character. And I know that it is you I have to thank for this tremendous piece of good fortune."

She flung her arms enthusiastically round Miss Duff's neck,—to her mother she never betrayed such demonstrativeness—but Miss Duff replied coolly, "I have done little in the affair. Charlotte only mentioned in a letter that her German friend wanted an English girl to go out with her daughter, and as Charlotte has only sons to offer, I suggested you."

"You see it *was* your doing," Patience interrupted triumphantly.

"It is your mother whom you should thank," Miss Duff replied. "It is she who has worked it with your father, and nobody knows how difficult that has been."

"Ah, I had forgotten father," Patience said, sobered as she always was at the mere mention of Mr. Thaile. "Of course he would violently oppose anything that was to give me pleasure and freedom. He likes to have mother and me pinned down like specimens, to be admired in public, and prodded and tortured in private. How on earth did mother ever get him round?"

Miss Duff shrugged her shoulders. "It must have been a pretty unpleasant job, and have cost her many sleepless nights and disagreeable scenes. Of course my name has been kept out of the affair. If your father had suspected that I had had anything to do with the idea, he would have vetoed it immediately. Luckily he has a great partiality for Charlotte: as she is a Peeress and he a Radical, he is ready to do anything to oblige her."

"And so I am really going away," Patience remarked, looking reflectively round the fire-lit room which, despite its shabbiness, possessed, like its owner, the dignity of age and associations. "I wonder whether I shall be a different person when I come back again?"

"Probably," Miss Duff assented. "Young things usually shed their opinions, tastes, and prejudices as snakes shed their skins. Perhaps when you have shaken off your old skin in the sunlight you will look upon life from another standpoint altogether."

"In certain ways I am sure I shall never, never change," Patience said to herself, as she ploughed home through the sopping fields, Satan dashing on in front, "I shall always think that Colne is a hole, and that I have been vilely miserable in it."

Then her thoughts flew to her mother, and a wave of remorse and contrition swept over her, flooding for the time being her wild joy at the prospect of release. "Why have I shown her so little love and consideration?" she reflected miserably, "I have been reproaching her for never thinking of my happiness, and all the while she has been working for it, and going through Heaven knows what on my account."

Plunged in the depths of self-abasement and humiliation, she splashed through the mud, the rain beating down upon her, gusts of cold wind swirling her short skirts round her legs. A small wood lay between her and Colne House. Bare, dripping trees lifted skeleton arms to the leaden sky, and rocked and creaked in the wind. The narrow path wound between them like a brown, slimy snake, half hidden in a bed of sodden leaves.

The dank depression of a stormy autumn day fell upon the girl, then she realized, with a sudden glow of delight, that her freedom had been assured her, that soon this place would know her no more, that she would have spread her wings, and flown into regions of gaiety and light.

She raised her head, whistled a waltz, and stepped buoyantly along the path; already all painful thoughts were forgotten. How gloriously she would enjoy herself, and how considerate and amiable she would be! Happiness always fostered her best qualities, and she thrived in the sun like the fruit and the flowers.

She was awakened from these blissful reflections by an angry bark, a growl, and then a protracted scuffling and yapping; evidently Satan had met

some enemy round the corner, and a fight was in full swing.

Patience hurried forward, and rounding the bend, saw two dogs rolling in the mud, an undistinguishable mass, while a tall man in a much-splashed tweed suit, was tugging violently at the collar of one of them.

"Don't touch them. Mine snaps," he called without looking up, but Patience had already plunged in, and seizing Satan when he came uppermost, dragged at him with all her strength.

When at last the combatants were torn apart, their owners, who had also suffered in the fray, examined one another curiously. Patience saw that the man was even taller than she had thought, with a slim, active hard figure; his face was weather-beaten, and he had very blue eyes, and a hogged moustache. Though he and his clothes had obviously seen considerable wear and tear, they were both exceedingly well-made, and fitted one another with that comfortable perfection which only the conjunction of a good figure and a good tailor can achieve.

"I must apologise for my dog's behaviour; I am afraid he attacked yours," he said, lifting his cap with one hand, while he held the bleeding collie firmly with the other, "I think we have met before; my name is Cunningham Roper."

Patience had dropped on to her knees beside Satan, and was wiping the blood off his ears and head. Her clothes were splashed with mud, and a strand of fair hair had blown across her face. "I don't remember having met you before," she said, raising her eyes, "but of course I know your name."

"In no very complimentary connection, I am afraid," he replied with a laugh. "But my memory in this instance is better than yours. We have met—three years ago at an At Home at Lady Manning's house. I had just returned from India, and you were very young."

"A flapper," she amended, laughing, "with my hair down, and exceedingly awkward."

He did not pay the obvious compliment—evidently he did not go in for such things—but she was pleased with the tribute that his recollection of a chance meeting with her three years ago implied. "I suppose you have come back to contest the division?" she asked.

"Yes; with this tremendous spread of socialism, I shall have my work cut out. It's a pity you're on the other side, and I shan't have you to canvass for me."

He was one of those men whose eyes convey what their lips refrain from saying. Patience, looking up, felt both flattered and elated.

"I don't agree with my father's politics at all," she declared, "I am a tremendous Imperialist."

"What heresy!" he exclaimed—when he smiled his face looked years younger—"I am afraid it is an unpardonable offence for you even to speak to the Arch Enemy—I was almost going to say Arch Fiend!"

Patience blushed hotly; she was thinking of the scurrilous campaign which Mr. Thaile had carried on against the Conservative candidate at the last general election. She herself had been laid up with a bad attack of influenza at the time, but she had heard enough of the contest to make her feel thoroughly ashamed. Mr. Thaile had not scorned the

most personal attacks upon his enemy. He was, he declared, one of those empty-headed, scatter-brained soldiers, who only care about horse-racing, betting and drinking, and who afterwards take up politics to gain a little kudos—what kudos could be got from politics nowadays he omitted to say. That Captain Cunningham Roper was a V. C. and had done exceedingly good work for his country, he chose to ignore, and by hints and innuendoes, he conveyed the impression that Roper's past life would not bear inspection.

Patience rose to her feet, and slipping her stick through the collar of the now subdued Satan turned to go. Her companion, with the collie on a leash, walked by her side.

"Are you going back to India?" she inquired in order to change the subject.

"I don't know—probably. In this Radical corner, I haven't the remotest chance of being returned, and I couldn't stick loafing about doing nothing." He looked straight in front of him. "However it all depends," he added.

"Do you know," she said suddenly, turning shining eyes upon him, "if I were a man, I would rather be a V. C. than anything else."

"Would you?" he said, quite unmoved. "It mostly depends upon whether there is somebody there to report you. The best things ever done have never been rewarded or even known, simply because there was nobody on the spot to tell of them."

"You are singularly modest," she observed.

"Modesty is one of the few handicaps I escape. Wait until you get on my vulnerable spot." He

smiled at her with an air of good fellowship which made her feel she had known him for years.

"I am afraid I shall have to wait a very long time," she said. "This is the garden gate and I must say good-bye."

"But we shall meet again soon," he said eagerly, taking her outstretched hand. "Though I shouldn't be allowed within these sacred precincts, we are sure to see one another elsewhere. Remember my fields adjoin yours."

She shook her head. "No, I am going abroad almost immediately," she said without enthusiasm.

It was growing dark, and the rain was beating between them, but she saw with a flash of satisfaction that his face fell.

"What a pity!" he exclaimed, "but you will be coming back soon?"

"I somehow have a presentiment that I shall never come back here," she declared, a sudden feeling of loss descending upon her. Then without waiting to hear his surprised rejoinder, she freed her hand from his grasp, and dragged the unwilling Satan quickly down the garden path.

The house lay in gloomy silence. Hurrying through the deserted hall, with its fine pictures and its massive oak furniture, she ran into the housemaid. "Where is Mrs. Thaile?" she demanded.

"Mistress has got a bad headache, and said she would rest till dinner-time," the servant informed her.

"Then please bring me up some tea to my room," Patience ordered; and she climbed up to her domain, followed by Satan.

After the dog's bites had been washed, and Pa-

tience had had a hot bath, she slipped into a tea gown, and lay down on the sofa to think matters over as she sipped her tea.

"Poor mother, she must have had a fearful scene," she reflected, suddenly remembering the few sentences she had overheard when leaving the house. She knew those petulantly angry reproaches about some ridiculous trifle; they were invariably the prelude to a barrel-organ recital, repeated many hundreds of times—of imagined wrongs, bitter complaints, cruel abuse, and wild threats. And how patiently her mother bore these! She had never been heard to lose her temper or make an angry retort. Patience wondered whether she minded the life here so dreadfully after all, or perhaps the privilege of living in a beautiful house, surrounded with art treasures, had been dinned into her ears with such persistency that she had grown to believe it herself? Of course she was middle-aged, and had lived her life, and was therefore not nearly so much to be pitied as her daughter. Patience was always greatly moved by the contemplation of her own sorrows, but to-night she was also genuinely contrite and unhappy about those of her mother. She felt she might have done more to make existence at Colne House less dreary and difficult, and she might also have persisted in trying to make a friend and companion of her mother—a display of enough real love and sympathy would probably have bridged the gulf between them. And then she could have confided in her mother, have told her of the encounter with Captain Roper, of the instant sympathy she had felt for him, and of her desire to meet him again.

Here she drew up abruptly; she did not believe for one moment that her mother would ever go against a violently expressed command of Mr. Thaile's, even if it involved her child's happiness. No, Patience felt, she would never have helped her to any intimacy with Mr. Thaile's enemy. And how humane and capable and straight this enemy looked! Patience's eye brightened. She could imagine him cool and courageous in any tight place, considerate and chivalrous to all women; good-natured yet determined. And how absolutely unaffected and unconceited he was, and how well his shooting suit fitted him! What a clean, wholesome-looking man of action he was! His tie and his eyes were just the right colour, and there was such a merry twinkle in the latter! No, decidedly, Germany was not such a desirable place as she had imagined, and Colne possessed advantages after all. But what would be the good of remaining? Cunningham Roper would only stay till the election was over, during which time she would probably hardly see him; then afterwards he would return to India, and her prison doors would have shut upon all hope of escape.

Her mind was still in a condition of chaotic uncertainty when she opened the drawing-room door. The two standard lamps, under their large amber-coloured shades, cast a vague, soft light over the delicate harmonies of the room. The pale gold curtains, of the same hue as the walls, were drawn, and the leaping flames lit up the polished surfaces of inlaid cabinets and tables, the subdued glow of the thick Eastern carpet, and the perfectly-hung prints and water-colours. They also illuminated

the figure of Mrs. Thaile, lying back in a deep arm-chair drawn up to the tiled hearth. They played upon the sweeping folds of her black satin gown, and upon the whiteness of her arms and shoulders. On a table by her side were a pile of books and newspapers, and a blue bowl of roses, but her eyes were shut, and her whole attitude expressed despondency and fatigue. Patience was suddenly struck with the contrast between the cosy, tasteful beauty of the room, and the weary melancholy of its solitary occupant. It was a scene which in after years she was frequently to recall, and each time with a tightening of the heart.

"Mother," she said softly. Her footsteps made no sound on the thickness of the carpet, and Mrs. Thaile looked up with a start. Instantly a curtain of cool serenity dropped over her features—a curtain which her husband had taught her in self-defence to assume.

"Mother," Patience repeated, dropping on to a low stool by the fire, "Aunt Cordelia has told me the news—that I am to go away to Germany."

Mrs. Thaile raised herself slightly, and looked down at her daughter. "I was going to tell you myself. I suppose you are very glad?" The question sounded more like the statement of a fact, yet Patience hesitated. A few hours previously, hesitation in similar circumstances would have seemed unthinkable to her.

"I suppose I am," she said slowly. "And yet I somehow don't like the idea of leaving here now."

She noted the sudden pleasure which leapt to her mother's eyes, and felt small and mean at her implied deception. No, she would tell everything;

perhaps the best happiness was to be found at Colne after all.

"I want to have a talk with you," she said, wheeling round so that the two faced one another. Her eye, trained from babyhood to note and appreciate form and colour, rested with pleasure upon the youthfully graceful figure reclining in the chair, upon the well-dressed hair, still thick and blond, upon the sweep of black satin, the old lace on the bodice, and the emerald pendant which rose and fell on her mother's white neck. And she felt a sudden admiration for a woman who so completely retained all personal self-respect, even though she was buried in the country, with a bad-tempered, selfish husband, whom she must surely long since have ceased to love.

"I was delighted when Aunt Cordelia told me," the girl said slowly; "but so much seems to have happened since then."

Mrs. Thaile leant slightly forward, the fire-light throwing her clear-cut profile into sharp relief. Mother and daughter felt that they were drawing near to a mutual confidence, which until this moment had always evaded them.

Suddenly loud and rather dragging footsteps crossed the hall—footsteps which both listeners heard with ineradicable sensations of apprehension, footsteps which broke upon their confidence like a heavy, destructive blow.

"Agnes, Agnes," an angry voice shouted, "Where the deuce are you? I have been hunting for you everywhere to help me catalogue this last lot——" The voice died away in irritable grumblings.

Mrs. Thaile rose swiftly to her feet. "I must go," she said. "Are you really not anxious to visit Germany?"

But a sudden revulsion of feeling had swept over Patience, a violently abrupt mental *bouleversement* to which her nature, with its emotional instability, was sometimes prone. The sound of her father's voice and footsteps, the re-awakened consciousness of his dreaded and unavoidable presence, and all that it stood for, had swept away every other consideration. He personified all that she hated, and she felt, with an almost superstitious fear, that in his vicinity every chance of happiness would be ruthlessly annihilated. Germany again became delectable because it did not contain him, because many hundreds of miles of land and water lay between it and the master of Colne House.

"No, as you have made all the arrangements, and everything is settled, I think I had better go," she said steadily.

Mrs. Thaile gave her one quick inquiring glance, but the voice outside was again raised angrily, and with a little wistful sigh she turned and left the room.

Patience flung herself on the chintz-covered sofa, and buried her face in a pile of cushions. "I am going to a place where there will be gaiety and laughter, and where I shall dance and enjoy myself, and learn to feel young and jolly," she repeated automatically. But her cheeks were wet with tears, and her heart heavy with a vague regret.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THE winter sun, a sharply-defined orange disc, was shining down upon the little town of Stelnitz. It illuminated the sloping roofs of the old houses, and showed up the stone carving on the façade of the *Rathaus*, which, in its imposing bulk, formed one side of the market place. The houses at right angles, with their odd little balconies, and projecting windows, seemed to be peering down curiously at the doings of the town; for 'life' at Stelnitz always gravitated towards the *Marktplatz*, the general meeting-place for friends and acquaintances.

To-day it presented a particularly animated scene, for it was Sunday, and the band of the 290th Infantry Regiment was giving its weekly concert. In the middle of the big square, under the whiskered and uniformed statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I, the circle of blue tunics and scarlet collars stood out sharply; while the sun glinted on helmets and on instruments, making a shining ring of light.

Up and down the pavement in front, the population of Stelnitz promenaded leisurely, listening to the music, and examining one another with unabated interest, though the same groups passed and repassed every few minutes.

Admiring eyes followed the *Leutnants*, who

strolled negligently along, in groups of twos and threes, their hands plunged into the pockets of their pale grey cloaks, their swords clanking on the pavement. They stood aside and saluted deferentially as the heavy Major Stoll ambled past, his timid little wife, in her brown felt hat, tripping at his side, his fair-haired daughter, Ilse, dawdling behind in order to obtain a special greeting for herself from the gallant young *Leutnants*. A string of shop-girls in their Sunday finery—white hats, low-necked blouses, yellow boots—barred the way, giggling and chattering. With a nod and a meaning smile, the *Leutnants* passed them by; probably they knew them infinitely better than they knew the fair-haired Ilse Stoll, or even the pretty Irmgard, hanging on her father's arm—the red-faced Hauptmann Winkmar, who had an unassailable weakness for the bottle. Clumps of *Einjähriger*, in their unaccustomed uniforms, on the anxious look-out for officers—standing rigidly at attention when one of these passed—alternated with bands of boys from the *Gymnasium*, in their red or yellow or purple caps, with brilliant ties and Bordeaux-coloured boots and gloves, attired to kill.

On the right of the *Marktplatz*, commanding a fine view of Kaiser Wilhelm der Erste's profile, and the gay crowd of people promenading in front of him, was a big confectioner's shop. Behind its glass windows were displayed that variety of delectable and enticing *Süssigkeiten* which may be found at even the humblest pastrycook's in the Fatherland. Luscious nutcream and mocha cakes, ginger hearts in varying sizes,—a huge assortment

of sweet edibles, mostly unknown to the British eye, but all extremely appetising. Behind one of the large panes of glass stood several small round tables, covered with red and white check cloths. Here the gilded youth of Stelnitz was wont to sit, consuming coffee with whipped cream, and large slices of *Nusstorte*, in full view of the ever-interested population.

From this agreeable resort, a group of five persons emerged—a group which, on this particular Sunday morning, appeared to evoke very considerable interest and attention.

Major Trenberg was a man of medium height, with a fine curling moustache, which, besides being most decorative, served the excellent purpose of disguising his mouth. He had a mobile face, and an active figure, which had escaped the usual corpulence of Teuton middle-age. In fact, according to German ideas, he was extraordinarily young-looking for his years—a youthfulness which arose from the comfortable habit of shifting all responsibilities and cares on to other shoulders, and of considering the problems of life less vital than those of a game of cards.

As he stepped on to the pavement, he pulled up the collar of his delicate grey cloak with a white-gloved hand, and turned solicitously to his companion. "*Gnädiges Fräulein* must not miss all the music. Shall we walk to the corner?"

Patience flung one end of her long fur stole over her shoulder, tilted her large black hat, and nodded enthusiastically, "Yes, do let's. But what about the others?" she added doubtfully, glancing back.

Frau Trenberg, in her modest brown dress and round felt hat, still stood on the steps, grasping two large parcels under her arms. She was speaking to her daughter, Adelheid, who was listening impatiently, her blonde head, crowned by a minute white fur capote, turned longingly in the direction of a young officer, hesitating on the pavement.

"We must pay this call," Frau Trenberg protested gently, "The *Frau Landrätin* will be offended if we delay longer."

"What a nuisance! The weather is so fine and the music is playing particularly well," the girl demurred, the corner of her eye upon the half-averted grey figure of the little *Leutnant*. But after all, obedience and sweet submission cannot fail to enhance feminine charms in the male eye, so she turned with a little *moue*, and an air of cheerful sacrifice, "I am afraid it must be adieu then, Herr von Predow," she said, "I must pay calls with the Mamma."

The young man bowed deeply, with heels together and hand raised to the rim of his helmet, "I shall look forward to the pleasure of seeing the ladies another day."

But Frau Trenberg, whose kindly heart could never bear disappointing others, interposed, "If you have nothing better to do this evening, Herr von Predow, we should be very pleased if you would eat a *Butterbrod* with us. We shall be just a family party."

Adelheid smiled radiantly, and the *Leutnant* again clicked his heels together, "With the greatest pleasure, *gnädige Frau*."

Patience and the Major were standing at the

corner, studying the programme, when the little lieutenant hurried up. He caused quite a special flutter, for he was adored by the feminine portion of Stelnitz, and was considered a particular ornament to the Infantry Regiment Prinz Johann Albrecht von Plettenburg. He swung from the hips as he walked, and his small, slightly-built figure was always attired in the most immaculate of uniforms. A short and rather impertinent nose, a pair of blue eyes, over-full lips, surmounted by a slight upturned moustache, and fair hair waved across his forehead, were included in a personal equipment which feminine Stelnitz found irresistible. When added to these were the facts of his ancient and noble lineage, his graceful dancing, his smartness in riding and skating, his rumoured personal luxuries, and gallant adventures, and his half-haughty, half-audacious manner—was it surprising that he was inundated with love-letters, and surrounded by adoring glances?

“*Gnädiges Fräulein* enjoying the music?” he asked, throwing Patience one of his killing smiles.

She laughed at him over her shoulder. He was such an entirely novel type of male, and he interested and amused her as much as did the hundred and one new and entertaining things she saw around her. “Anyway,” she thought with satisfaction, “I am sure he doesn’t know the difference between mezzotint and chiaroscuro,” and she was quite ready for a passing little flirtation.

“I wish they would play *Carmen*,” she observed: “it always makes me feel so gay.”

“But, of course, *gnädiges Fräulein*, your wish

is a command," the Major said gallantly; and he stepped up to the ring of musicians. The band-master, who was standing in the middle and had the important air of a commanding general, hurried forward, saluting with rigid respect.

"You see, *gnädiges Fräulein*," von Predow murmured in Patience's ear, "you have only to express a wish, and we are all waiting, eager and longing to fulfil it."

She felt so jubilant, so gay and light-hearted, that for the moment she was ready to believe it. Life was, after all, well worth having, and youth a gift as magical as she had imagined. How animated the square was, with its queer, irregular, brown houses, rising into the blue sky, with the sound of music, laughter and voices! The people were no hurrying, callous crowd, but a leisurely, happy, interested collection of individuals, and—of this she was acutely conscious—all interested in herself. As the first strains of *Carmen* burst joyously into the crisp, clear air, and she stood tall and slim, in her large black furs, and her large black hat, the Major and Herr von Predow on either side, she felt as if the *Marktplatz* were a stage, and as if she were making her triumphal entry accompanied by a bodyguard of honour, while her challenging young eyes looked down upon the impressed and expectant audience. All the wounded self-pride, all the chafings at unappreciated qualities, were soothed by the salve of deferential admiration and eager attention. Here attractive youth was ardently considered, instead of being relegated to a corner, to make way for dusty tomes and grotesque curios.

Her feet danced along the pavement. Added to all her other reasons for exhilaration, was the fact—rapidly ascertained—that she was the best-dressed woman on the scene, and that glances of envy as well as of admiration followed her progress. This knowledge gave her an added feeling of confidence, especially as she had not yet learnt the habitual attitude of the ordinary German towards dress, or the difference in the national idea of taste. Still there was no doubt that the elegant simplicity of her perfectly-cut costume, and the richness of her furs, in a community where such things were an unusual luxury, created no little stir. The men at her side were quite aware of the fact, and felt her smartness as an added glamour to their own appearance. Had Patience been related to either, their sensations would have been very different, for the German male usually mistrusts smartness in his womenfolk, as an indication that too much money, time, and thought are diverted from himself and his own particular wants.

"*Gnädiges Fräulein* is creating a regular sensation," Diedrich von Predow affirmed. He felt confident that all Stelnitz was linking his name with that of the "fabulously rich English Mees" and that dozens of hearts were smarting with jealousy.

After all, it might not be such a bad idea; he was confoundedly hard up, his debts were becoming more than a joke, and the Colonel was so strict and moral that he might prove disagreeable if certain things came to his ears, connected with the "irresistible Diedrich"—as Herr von Predow was universally called in the town. "Yes, I assure

you, *gnädiges Fräulein*, you are the one topic of conversation," he continued, edging a little closer. "Last evening in the Casino, all the officers were talking about you. Your ears must have looked like carmine shells, we were saying such nice things of you."

The corners of Patience's mouth twitched: for one instant she tried to imagine Captain Cunningham Roper making such remarks; but he belonged to her past life, which she had determined to banish from her mind as if it had never existed.

"You see, *gnädiges Fräulein*, we needed you in this little hole to brighten us up," the Major remarked, waving off the automaton-like salutes of a string of young subalterns.

The progress of the trio up and down the short span of pavement seemed to Patience very like a state procession, in which soldiers, non-commissioned officers, *Einjähriger*, and *Leutnants* built a cordon of continual salutes, varying from the rigid throwing up of the hand, and sharp turning of the head and eyes, to the expressively deferential two white-gloved fingers to the cap, and the accompanying look and bow.

It all exhilarated and entertained her; she felt as if she were suddenly raised on a platform, and carried before an acclaiming crowd, instead of trudging lonely and neglected in the mud. Her whole temperament had so long rebelled against a solitary existence, devoid of the incentive of praise and appreciation, that she now threw herself heedlessly into the stream of flattery and compliments, absorbing hungrily all that was offered.

"My adjutant has nearly fallen down three

times in the last hundred yards," the Major declared, "He cannot take his eyes off *gnädiges Fräulein!*"

Patience looked up, and saw a tall and very broad officer advancing towards them. He held himself so well that his massive shoulders and huge bulk hardly appeared cumbersome. His face was ruddy and handsome, but the prophetic eye might have seen in the square jaw a future likelihood of double chins, and a general danger of unwieldy corpulence.

Few young girls, however, possess a prophetic eye, and Patience had thrown all her habitual suspicion, perception, and reserve overboard. She only saw an erect, imposing giant, advancing eagerly towards her, pleasure and anticipation kindling in his eyes.

"My adjutant, Herr Rabenstedt,—*gnädiges Fräulein*, whose name I can never pronounce."

The band burst into the triumphant refrain of the Toreador's song, the young man bowed deeply, and the introduction was effected.

"Come round this evening, and drink a glass of beer with us," the Major said, turning to his adjutant.

As they left the market-place, Patience was conscious only of a large figure, saluting and smiling, and of a pair of bright brown eyes devouring her eagerly until she and her companion were hidden from sight by the projecting walls of the ancient *Rathaus*.

CHAPTER II

EVER since afternoon coffee, Frau Trenberg had been busy in the kitchen, preparing delicacies for the evening meal. Now the soldier-servant, Schmidt, was bringing in the results of her labours, and placing them in appetising array on the round table. The brilliant gas-light illuminated bowls of Italian salads, herrings in jelly, plates of pale pink sausage and cold meats, *Pumpernickel* sandwiches, and a basket of home-made *Honigkuchen*.

Frau Trenberg pattered to and fro on the yellow-stained boards, putting a finishing touch here and there; then she passed through the folding doors—which always stood wide open—into the *Wohnzimmer* beyond.

Here, round the large table, sat a very merry assembly. Throned in the midst of the massive brown velvet sofa, sat Patience—she had not been long enough in the Fatherland to have acquired a respectful awe of that piece of furniture—and near her, by special request, sat Oberleutnant Rabenstedt.

“A great honour, *gnädiges Fräulein*,” he had murmured, almost with embarrassment, as she had suggested there was room by her side. “The first time I have sat on the sofa,” and he squeezed his large frame gingerly in between the table and the sarcophagus-like seat of honour.

"Don't break all the springs, little one," Diedrich von Predow jeered from the other side of the table. "Do you know, *gnädiges Fräulein*," he added, turning to Adelheid, "there isn't a chair in my flat he hasn't broken."

"Poor martyr!" Adelheid tittered, "you are always being ill-treated!"

"If only *gnädiges Fräulein* would be kind to me, nothing else matters," he declared in a lowered voice, bending his blue eyes, with their most irresistible expression, upon the round childish face near him.

"Come, come," Rabenstedt interposed in his strong resounding voice, "if you will have spindle-legged things that snap when you look at them, what can you expect? Do you know, the beautiful Diedrich's flat is furnished with pale pink and white, and he has a rose-coloured satin quilt, which he had sent from Paris. In fact you would think you were in the apartment of a French—lady," he finished rather lamely.

"Is that true?" Adelheid asked, looking up with incredulous admiration at the little *Leutnant* near her.

"Of course it is," Rabenstedt interrupted loudly. "His bed is tied up with large pink bows!"

"What nonsense are you talking?" Patience demanded. "You are not going to tell me that German officers have their bedrooms festooned with pink ribbons?"

"Not all of them, *gnädiges Fräulein*," Rabenstedt said, turning his laughing eyes upon her. "Mine, for instance, is the epitome of stoical severity. I do all my cooking on my washstand,

which is also my chest of drawers, and dressing-table."

"Do you cook?" Patience asked in surprise.

"But of course. I make a delightful little meal for myself most evenings. Last night, unfortunately, we had rather a catastrophe. My soldier-servant put some flaked soap instead of semolina into the soup."

"Ugh! I suppose you didn't eat it?"

"No, but as the good Fritz hates waste he washed my handkerchiefs in it instead."

"Supper is ready," Frau Trenberg said, laying her hand with a beaming smile on her daughter's fair head. "Ah, here is my husband."

The Major appeared, trim and dapper in his dove-grey *Literwka*; he offered his arm ceremoniously to Patience, and the whole party trooped into the adjoining room.

It was a most festive little meal. Schmidt handed round cups of straw-coloured tea and glasses of beer, and then retired.

"You must have another helping of this Italian salad," Frau Trenberg insisted, pushing the bowl towards Patience, "otherwise I shall think you do not like my German dishes."

"Indeed I do," Patience declared. "The things are so delicious that I assure you I eat twice as much as I do in England."

"Then there you must eat nothing at all," the Major affirmed. "*Gnädiges Fräulein* has not the appetite of a bird."

"This delicious piece of *Schinkenwurst* will melt in your mouth," Rabenstedt said, spearing a round of pink sausage, and skilfully depositing it on Pa-

tience's plate, already piled up with a large variety of edibles.

"*Prosit gnädiges Fräulein!*" Diedrich von Predow exclaimed, raising his glass towards her.

The others followed his example. "To the very special health of Mees Saile!" the Major cried. "May she remain very long in Germany!"

"May she never go away!" Herr von Predow supplemented; but it was the dark eyes of Helmuth Rabenstedt that caught hers, and held them fast in a half-laughing, half-challenging glance.

Frau Trenberg, in her Sunday "Reform" dress, with a large cameo brooch fixed in the middle of her corsetless figure, looked round the table, her kind face shining with emotional happiness. She could never see a young man and maiden together without apprehending in them the probable bridegroom and bride; and her tender, sentimental nature, which the hard knocks and rebuffs of the world had left as soft and unsuspecting as ever, wove touching romances round everyone. What charming couples these four young people would be! Only she could not quite decide how they would be best apportioned. A fair maiden, she had always heard, ought to mate with a dark man; in that case her beloved Adelheid ought by rights to belong to the black-eyed Helmuth Rabenstedt. And indeed what a delightful pair they would make—she small, childish, and blonde; he, large, commanding, and dark. But then Rabenstedt was very poor, and though he ought soon to get his captaincy, it would be rather a struggle for her darling little daughter. No, perhaps Diedrich von Predow would be a better *parti*, even though

he was almost as fair as Adelheid, and not much bigger. They would be a dainty couple, and he belonged to an old and noble family, and lived in a grand and luxurious manner. And he seemed to be very fond of the dear child—how tenderly he was looking at her—Frau Trenberg swallowed a morsel of venison, and the tears started to her eyes. Yes, they certainly cared for one another. Some tales were circulated of Predow's piquant adventures among the fair sex, but then people always were uncharitable, and of course a charming little *Leutnant* like Diedrich couldn't help getting talked about——

"Wife, is there no more beer?" the Major asked, "we have all drunk out our glasses."

"I will see at once," Frau Trenberg replied, rising hurriedly to her feet.

"Well, *Mahlzeit, Mahlzeit*," the Major said, and everyone stood up, and shook hands. Patience had her first initiation into the fact that this old German custom provides an excellent opportunity for a tender squeeze, or even a fervent handkiss,—to which, as an unmarried girl, she had no right—a long meaning look, and a few murmured words. All these tributes she received from Rabenstedt, who planted his large bulk between her and the room, and seemed to take a laughing possession of her.

"What shall we do this evening?" he asked, "I feel as if I could do anything—knock down the whole house, and stride out with you in the palm of my hand!" He stretched his large frame delightedly, and burst out into one of his loud, hearty guffaws. Patience looking at him, felt as if noth-

ing could distress or disturb this lusty young warrior, to whom all existence seemed an agreeable joke.

"But suppose I did not want to come with you?" she queried.

He looked down at her. "You would," he said with conviction.

She was only half conscious of the amazing fact that she was not incensed with him, that, on the contrary, he seemed to provide the antidote she had wanted to the old life she had left behind; that, as for resenting anything, she felt gayer and happier than ever before. And they had never met until that very morning! Well, that was one of the advantages of the Teuton temperament: no time need be wasted on endless preliminaries, on the thawing of reserves, suspicions and shynesses—you plunged straight into a warm intimacy, and were not ashamed of showing your feelings.

The party settled down again round the *Wohnzimmer* table, which this time was covered with glasses, beer bottles, and smoking appliances. The men puffed at their strong-smelling, inexpensive German cigars, while Frau Trenberg and her daughter produced large pieces of canvas, which they were embroidering in cross-stitch for Christmas gifts.

"A little music," Frau Trenberg begged, "Karlchen must sing *Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten* for Mees Patience to hear. My husband has such a beautiful, tender voice," she added, "and he sang that song the first time we met. It was at a little party at Frau Hauptmann Slinsky's house. I

had only just come out, and he was the youngest *Leutnant* in the Regiment——”

“All right, Wife,” the Major interrupted, “I am sure *gnädiges Fräulein* does not care to hear an old worn out voice, when she can listen to two *Leutnants*. Come along, Rabenstedt, you accompany Predow.”

The three men had passed into the salon, which, like the dining-room, communicated with the *Wohnzimmer* by folding doors, also invariably kept open. Schmidt was clearing away supper, carefully tip-toeing about in order not to disturb the *Herrschaften*. Once he dropped a fork, and looked up guiltily. Frau Trenberg shook her head reprovingly, and the Major shouted from the other room, “Old ass! Lie down on the ground too!”

Rabenstedt had seated himself at the piano, and was running his hands lightly over the keys. Then he gave a push to the music-stool, and broke into *Wein, Weib und Gesang*. He had a good touch, and played with sureness and fire. “Come, *Diedrichchen*,” he cried, his fingers tearing with surprising nimbleness through the finale of the waltz, “which of your enticing ‘couplets’ are you going to sing for *gnädiges Fräulein*? What do you say to the *Prinzesschen*? That shows off both your humour and pathos.”

Predow nodded, and advanced to the piano, where he assumed an easy attitude, his fair head slightly tilted, one white, manicured hand inserted between two buttons of his tightly-fitting tunic. He possessed a small, untrained, but not disagreeable voice, and an unassailable *aplomb*, which invariably carried his audience with him. But the

chief part of the performance was his "interpretation." As the little Princess, he tripped gracefully across the room, moving his small white hands daintily, his voice transformed into a piping falsetto. Later, when the Princess fell upon evil days, he held out imploring arms, grief and despair expressed in a long-drawn tremolo.

Frau Trenberg wept over her cross-stitch, and there were tears of admiring emotion in Adelheid's blue eyes. Patience was taking in the whole scene framed by the open doorway.

The three gas jets illuminated the room brilliantly, showing up the blue stamped-velvet suite, which had formed part of Frau Trenberg's *Ausstattung*. They blazed down upon the round table in the middle of the room, decorated with a white crochet cover, made by the Frau Major's ever-busy fingers; upon the walls dotted over with photographs, painted plates and plush brackets; upon the huge white china stove, and the festooned lace curtains.

But to Patience, all these objects only formed an unimportant, if novel, background to the three men grouped round the piano. Rabenstedt, his huge bulk dwarfing the small instrument, his massive head and square shoulders appearing above the top, his fingers touching the keys with a delicacy and lightness quite out of keeping with his appearance; the Major, leaning over his shoulder, humming the tune softly with a still passable tenor voice; and Predow—the "irresistible Diedrich"—curveting gracefully, small, lithe, scented and curled, white hands waving, tapering feet dancing lightly over the faded brown roses in the carpet.

Yes, this was novelty at last—youth and gaiety and laughter. The three were shouting the refrain of a popular couplet: “Love and song, kisses and wine”—yes, here one was light-hearted and happy, though the furniture was shabby, and the rooms inartistic. What did it matter? She—Patience Thaile—felt quite an affection for the cheap ornaments, and the impossible blue suite. Nobody's happiness had been sacrificed to them: they seemed to look on in cheerful tastelessness at the merry-makings, to which they were certainly well accustomed.

“Has *gnädiges Fräulein* enjoyed the great musical treat we have offered her?” The men had returned to their seats, and beer was frothing into their glasses, as Frau Trenberg bustled round, anxiously heedful for their comfort.

“Yes, I liked it immensely. It is a tremendous advantage to be able to play.”

“Oh, we are a most musical regiment,” Rabenstedt affirmed, puffing contentedly at his cigar. “We have eleven *Leutnants* who can perform, three Captains and a Major;” he made a deep bow to Trenberg, whose beautiful, curling moustache was buried in a mug of beer.

“There is no doubt that you are a far more musical nation than we,” Patience said reflectively.

“Ah, now we have given you an exhibition in the realms of music,” Predow exclaimed, “wait till you see us dance!”

“That's where our Diedrichchen is in his element,” Rabenstedt interposed, “flitting over the ground like a zephyr, with a charming young girl in his arms!”

"Yes," Adelheid said, lifting her eyes from her cross-stitch to the little *Leutnant's* face, "Herr von Predow is considered the best dancer in the Regiment."

The "irresistible Diedrich" bowed a perfectly unembarrassed acknowledgment of this compliment, which he evidently considered as merely a natural recognition of his prowess.

"*Gnädiges Fräulein* must promise me the Flower-waltz at the Casino ball," he murmured in Adelheid's ear. He received a radiant smile from the blushing little Fräulein Trenberg, whose trembling fingers sewed weird extemporaneous patterns in the canvas table-cover.

"Yes, the Regiment is giving a ball next month," Rabenstedt said, leaning towards Patience. "I know you dance perfectly. It will be heavenly to waltz with you."

"Have you heard we are having a little dance before the ball?" the Major called across the table. "Strictly in the Regiment."

There was a general clapping of hands, and they all drained their beer glasses, including Frau Trenberg and her daughter.

"*Prosit, Prosit!*" they all cried, and Rabenstedt utilised the clatter to whisper, "*Gnädiges Fräulein*, at this informal dance you must dance with me often, often, often!"

Patience leant back against the brown velvet sofa. Her face was flushed and hot; the vast china stove emitted a tremendous heat, and, according to German custom, double windows kept out all fresh air. She saw the room vaguely through a haze of cigar smoke, touched with the

odour of beer—it seemed the essence of her new life, inundating and stimulating her.

When at last the *Leutnants* rose reluctantly to go, the cumbrous clock, presented to the Major by a former regiment, pointed to midnight. There was much clicking of heels, bowing, and kissing of hands—of which both girls received a surreptitious share—before the door closed on the two figures, one small, slight, and blond, the other massive, towering, and dark.

Patience looked after them reflectively, “And this is only the beginning,” she thought to herself.

“Good-night, my darling daughter!” Frau Trenberg murmured, embracing Adelheid tenderly. Already she saw her attired in white satin and myrtle.

Adelheid herself went to sleep with a white glove under her pillow, which the “irresistible Diedrich” had left behind. Only Patience lay awake, with the scent of cigars in her nostrils, and one refrain beating in her head: “Love and Song, Kisses and Wine——”

CHAPTER III

LIFE in the Lessingstrasse flowed on in a manner highly agreeable to Patience Thaile. The whole family united in petting and making much of her, a procedure which agreed with her so excellently that, in the shortest possible time, she had forgotten she ever possessed a sharp tongue, or harboured bitter, miserable and despairing thoughts.

On the first day Frau Trenberg had clasped her in her ample arms, and had seemed as moved as if Patience had been her own long-lost child. "I am quite happy if people will only let me love them," she had said ingenuously, "and I am deeply grateful if they will give me a little affection in return."

And indeed her whole outlook upon life was so pathetically humble and selfless, that Patience felt it must disarm even the hardest creature. Her own critical young eyes were so softened that, instead of picking holes in the shapeless "Reform" dresses, and the unrestrained figure of her hostess, they saw only the cheerful economy and rigid self-denial which prevented the *Frau Major* from ever spending time or money on herself. Her whole life had been so occupied in working and planning for others, that she had never found leisure to reflect whether she also had some right to consideration; and, unconsciously perhaps, the people

around her had always accepted this attitude as the most natural thing in the world. Of course her husband felt that she was only doing her duty when—in addition to providing quite a handsome *dot*, and furnishing the entire establishment—she had worked, cooked and economised for him, besides paying his debts, and generally looking after his comfort, and over his various vagaries.

Patience, of course, knew nothing of all this; she only saw that Frau Trenberg was always busy, and invariably cheerful, and that she regarded her husband—gay, amusing and smart—with devoted admiration. How delightfully he played the piano—he could dash off anything from Wagner to a waltz—and he entertained Patience continually with his mimicry and his funny stories. She did not realize that his wife was meanwhile standing in the kitchen, hot and tired, concocting the appetising dishes which they afterwards ate with such relish. But indeed Frau Trenberg herself would have been more surprised than anyone, had she been told that she deserved either pity or admiration. She accepted absolutely her husband's view that she was doing her barest duty, and if ever she thought of their relative positions, it was half-apologetically to regret that he—young-looking, smart and lively—should have a middle-aged, unfashionable wife to take into society.

If Patience was too happy and absorbed in her own life to see below the surface, Adelheid Trenberg was equally oblivious. She was devoted to both her parents, but with her upbringing and environment, it was hardly surprising that she considered their domestic arrangements as quite cor-

rect. That the wife should bear all the brunt of the work, economies, worries and hardships of the household, was only natural, and was the rule which obtained in most of the families she knew intimately. When her turn came to marry, she would of course take the same burden unquestioningly upon her shoulders; meanwhile she was a young girl with the right—accorded to all young girls in the Fatherland—to enjoy herself, to go to entertainments, to have ample opportunities to acquire the one desired object of life—a husband. Of course she helped her mother in the kitchen; she had grown up with the firmly-imbued belief that no one who cannot cook can ever marry. And *Fräulein Trenberg* was far too good a mother not to arm her with the best equipment for the marriage-market, though needless to say, the sentimental *Frau Major* would have couched the fact in very different terms.

And so her beloved *Adelheid* was trained most carefully in every branch of cookery; she was taught to wash and iron, to embroider and knit, and to regard the male as an entirely superior, dominating creature, whose right it is to be pandered to and waited on by the inferior female.

To begin with, *Patience* had been inclined to consider this paragon of domesticity as rather a little goose. On the first Sunday evening, when *Predow* and *Rabenstedt* had come to supper, she had blushed and simpered, and had ventured only the most trite and futile little remarks. The English girl, judging by her own standards, assumed that she must be silly as well as socially untutored.

Soon, however, when *Patience* had seen more of

Adelheid, and the two girls, thrown continually together, grew confidential, she discovered another side to this fair-haired and budding *Hausfrau*. Adelheid was by no means a fool; she knew and cared for her German classics, and she was really musical, having an intimate knowledge and understanding of the work of her country's great composers. Patience was even more surprised to find that in some ways she was singularly shrewd and sharp. During their long conversations, she would frequently hit the mark, and vouchsafe observations displaying considerable insight and thought. Only when their confidences touched—as of course they most frequently did—upon the opposite sex, upon love, matrimony, and the many questions pertaining thereto, did Patience find the German girl silly, childish, and morbid. She was not, however, as impatient of her as might have been expected, for Adelheid had developed an admiring and enthusiastic infatuation for her new companion, which the latter could not but find flattering.

One afternoon the two girls were sitting in Patience's bedroom. Outside the snow was falling softly and persistently, but inside the airless warmth of a German *intérieur* prevailed; the china stove gave forth its even, dry heat, and Adelheid had carefully closed the window, drawing across it a strip of thick red felt to keep out all possible draughts.

Patience was perched on the bed, her knees drawn up to her chin. "You know men are not such wonderful creatures as you make out," she said reflectively, her eye wandering over the large

square of canvas, pinned up to protect the wall. On it was embroidered in blue cross-stitch the motto: "*Morgenstunde hat Gold im Munde.*" "You behave as if they were little tin gods, and it's very bad for them. For instance, on Sunday evening, you treated those two young men with awe-struck admiration, and hardly said anything yourself."

"But, *Herzchen*, I did!" Adelheid expostulated. She had already declared that Patience's name was no proper name at all, that it reminded her of Papa's horrid card games, and that she was going to call her dear darling little Mees by a pet name. So *Herzchen* Patience was christened, and "Little Heart" she remained for all the members of the flat in the Lessingstrasse.

"You murmured at intervals, 'How wonderful, *Herr Leutnant!* How beautiful! How clever!'" Patience cried. "Just as if you were a silly little barrel-organ. I never even guessed that instead of being a goose, you have a great many more wits than lots of girls."

Adelheid's busy fingers flitted in and out of her crochet—like her mother, she never sat for five minutes with idle hands. "With us it is not customary for the young girls to talk all the time," she said; but she did not add, what she instinctively felt, that the more wits you possessed, the more careful you were to hide them from that always-to-be-considered-creature—Man. She did not formulate even to herself the knowledge, probably transmitted in her blood from her mother, and her mother's mother, that the male does not want brilliancy or wit in his possible mate, that he instinc-

tively realizes they are dangerous weapons in the feminine hand.

But Patience had not yet learnt this lesson; at this juncture she was very far from dreaming that in a German wife sarcasm is a greater drawback than a squint, and repartee a more unpopular attribute than the worst complexion.

Personally, however, she had sheathed all her spikes. In this atmosphere of admiring devotion, she was gay, good-natured, and amusing; and she had the added attraction of the novel and unexplored. That she was more conversational, self-confident and emancipated, than the young girls of the place arose, of course, from her nationality; all omissions and commissions must be laid at the door of her country, and not of her character.

Some such thoughts were passing through Adelheid's head, as she looked up with half-doubting admiration at the idle hands, the lolling, slim figure, the large expanse of silk stocking on the bed.

"How often have you been in love, *Herzchen*?" she asked, dropping on her knees by her friend, and slipping her hand into Patience's. "I expect dozens of men have loved you desperately!"

"Oh, rot!" Patience said lightly. She was half-pleased with this girl's adoration of her, and half-repelled by her unrestrained manner of showing it. "I suppose every girl has had some men friends in whom she has taken an interest." A sudden vision rose before her of a rain-swept field, and a tall, spare athletic figure, but it was quickly obliterated by another figure, more vivid and highly-coloured—the figure of a towering, massive man in a dark uniform, laughing, gallant and insistent.

"In Germany young girls do not have men friends," Adelheid was saying. "They think, and plan, and work for the time when they will meet their *Bräutigam*."

"It doesn't seem to me they have much else to think of," Patience remarked, disengaging her hand. "They haven't any games to take their mind and their energies off it. Now, everything you do is done with one object in view—Matrimony."

"But, of course," Adelheid interposed. "Why should we waste our time doing useless things?"

"They aren't useless if they make one fit. It amuses me the way you spend your day—in the morning you go out into the kitchen and cook, with the image before you of the little *Leutnant* who will some day deign to eat your dishes; then you change your big blue apron for one with pink bows, and you dust the ornaments in the salon, and wonder when you will dust your own new suite; afterwards you walk up and down the Friedrichstrasse, and gaze at the *Leutnants*, to see which one will ask you to cook and dust for him; then you come home, and make the lace for the elaborate pillow-slips, and all the million other things in your trousseau, which is all lying in tidy heaps, marked with your own name, ready for whoever asks you to marry him!"

"How can you make such fun of us, *Herzchen*?" Adelheid asked reproachfully.

"Heaven forfend that I should!" Patience exclaimed, jumping off the bed, and stretching her arms. "I am happy, happy, happy here, and I think you girls ought to be thankful. Your par-

ents do everything to give you a good time. Even the poorest ones seem to have entertainments for their daughters, and don't shut them up till they are dusty and old. Do you know," she turned a laughing face to her companion, "the dust was inches thick on me when I came here!"

Adelheid looked quite bewildered, but she sat down as close to Patience as possible, and seized her hand again. "*Herzchen*, what do you think of Herr von Predow?" she asked in tones of mysterious eagerness.

"Oh, he's gay and amusing, but he seems to have a great opinion of himself."

"You think so?" Adelheid exclaimed with evident relief. "Why, he is the sweetest, prettiest, most elegant officer in the Regiment!"

"Well, you see, we don't like our men to be 'sweet' and 'pretty,'" Patience said with a laugh. "We like them strong, and hard, and masculine."

"Oh," Adelheid repeated, torn between satisfaction that her idol was safe from British invasion, and disappointment that he was not sufficiently admired. "I think he is simply perfect!" She hesitated, blushed, then flung her arms round Patience's neck, and buried her blonde head on her shoulder. "I adore and worship him!" she whispered in trembling ecstasy. "If I see him on the Friedrichstrasse—even quite far off—I am happy for the whole day. I went to the hair-dresser where he is shaved and *frisiert* every morning, and I bought a bottle of the scent he uses. Now if I lock my door, and squirt some on to my handkerchief, and shut my eyes, I can imagine that 'he'

is there. I do that every evening when I go to bed!"

Patience sat up with a slight jerk of remonstrance. She felt that type of embarrassment which she sometimes experienced during a foolish recitation; as if she must look away, or beg the person to stop, or get up and go. The dams of Adelheid's confidences had, however, been all swept away, and her audience found herself swamped in a flood of sentimental reminiscences, adoring protestations, and crudely immature reflections.

The German girl had, according to the ideas pertaining to her nation and class, been brought up in the strictest ignorance of those things considered by parents as "unsuitable" or "improper." As she happened to be obedient and straightforward, with a harmless, if sentimental, mind, she had never smuggled in forbidden books, or gathered garbled knowledge in a surreptitious manner; and she grew to the age of nineteen with as childishly-chaotic notions on the subject of matrimony as even her parents could have desired.

And yet, though this mysterious veil of silence and reserve was drawn around the whole question of love and marriage, the thoughts, aspirations, and desires of maidenhood were deliberately directed towards it. The fond mamma observes in the presence of the short-skirted *Backfisch* that "of course the dear child will marry one of the officers in her Papa's Battalion—probably his adjutant—or what about Hans, the cadet? He will be just the right age," etc., etc. And when the dear child emerges from short frocks and school, the whole energies of the household are focussed upon a pos-

sible mate for her. As she sits with mamma, sewing crochet lace on to the pillow-slips, sheets and table-cloths for her vast *Aussteuer*, is it surprising that conversation should drift into tender channels, that mamma should inquire guardedly about Leutnant B, who danced twice with her darling little daughter at the ball, and looked at her several times during the concert? And then mamma's sentimental reminiscences of her own marriage, of her adorable babies, followed by a veiled emotional allusion to probable babies in the future, with which her daughter blushing feels she will have something to do!—So she forms some wildly fantastic notions of the one tremendous, all-pervading secret—mysteriously delectable, terrifyingly fascinating, tremblingly desirable.

It was an undercurrent of all this that Patience apprehended, as she listened to Adelheid's unrestrained outpourings. She herself, with the unfettered run of her father's library, a quick wit, and powers of observation, had long since learnt the facts round which her companion was now hovering with an almost palpitating ignorance. But she regarded this acquired information in an entirely natural and matter-of-fact light. Though she was by no means unsusceptible—most of the Stelnitz mammas would have considered her a far greater flirt than their own dear daughters—"man" was for her surrounded by no mysterious halo. He was of course interesting—far more interesting than most girls—and she thoroughly despised those unfeminine creatures who profess a defiant contempt for the opposite sex. The opposite sex is there to be enchanted and enslaved; ultimately, per-

haps, to become the lover and the husband. But after all why tremble and whisper about it? It is the natural order of the universe.

Patience looked at the flushed, agitated, childish face pressed close to hers, and she realized the division between them. She felt immeasurably wise and old, enabled to look into the future with frank, clear eyes, while this ignorant little mass of sentimentality near her was shivering with morbid ecstasy on the brink of an awful mystery.

"We want some fresh air," Patience exclaimed; and shaking herself free from her companion's caresses, she crossed to the window and flung it open. "That is good," she added, as the cold air streamed in, white with melting snow-flakes. Across the deserted court-yard came the clank of harness, and the voice of the Major's soldier-servant: he was flirting in the shadows with the plump sixteen-year-old servant from the flat above.

"But, *Herzchen*, how cold!" Adelheid cried with a shiver.

Patience shut the window abruptly, and turned upon her companion. "I'll tell you what would do you good," she said. "A real hard game of hockey!"

Instead, they went out shopping with the *Frau Major*, and came back animated and chattering. Strangely enough, two figures—one small, slight, and blond, the other tall, massive, and dark—had passed and repassed them several times, and Patience, though she was so worldly and wise, had felt a strange, but most pleasurable elation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first occasion upon which Patience made her formal *début* in the Regiment was at the small dance mentioned by the Major. This occurred ten days after her first meeting with Predow and Rabenstedt, and while everything was still very novel and strange to her.

Frau Trenberg had already taken her to call upon the chief ladies of the regiment. One day, at twelve o'clock, they had set out—Frau Trenberg in her best costume, her hands tucked into a small, round muff,—and had handed in their cards first at the *Frau Oberst's* flat, afterwards going on to the Majors' and Captains' wives.

There were many things about this expedition which surprised and entertained the English girl. The Colonel's house, situated in the modern and residential portion of the little town, looked quite imposing outside, with its white stone front, carved and tessellated; while the sentry marching up and down in front of his black and white striped box, gave an added air of importance. Inside, however, they climbed up a dark, dingy wooden staircase, entirely devoid of carpet or decoration, and were kept waiting on the threshold while the soldier-servant took in the cards to see whether the Frau Oberst would receive or not. After a con-

siderable delay they were admitted into a salon of the usual type—the inevitable table, planted in front of the stiff sofa, and the inevitable comfortless chairs, placed in arbitrary regularity round it. Patience had barely perched herself upon one, when the folding-doors opened, and Frau Oberst Brander—the chief lady of the regiment—entered. She was big-boned and awkward, and her attire was so hopelessly tasteless and untidy, that it was obvious she regarded clothes as a necessary covering, and nothing else. The hair was brushed back tightly from her rather sallow face, but the mouth was kind, and the whole expression pleasant. “What a pity,” Patience thought, as she made her curtsy, “this is another case of virtue being so terribly unattractive!”

“I hope you like Germany,” the *Frau Oberst* said, speaking in good but rather stilted English. “Stelnitz is a small but agreeable town.”

“Oh, Mees Saile talks German beautifully!” Frau Trenberg hastily interposed. “You need not trouble to speak English.”

“Indeed,” Frau Brander observed stiffly, “very few English people can speak German.”

And then the conversation was held by the two married ladies, and Patience learnt that the place of the young girl is to sit deferentially by, not obtruding her opinions until they are asked for. She also noticed that when the *Frau Oberst* turned to her with a remark, she spoke in a different manner, as if she had to screw down her intelligence for the benefit of foolish youth.

“I suppose you are coming to our little dance on Thursday?” she asked Patience.

"Ah, yes," *Fräulein Trenberg* interrupted eagerly. "I am so glad it is to take place. *Mees Saile* loves dancing, and there are so few young girls in the regiment that she will be a great acquisition." The kind *Frau Major* beamed at her *protégée* with a proprietary air of pride.

"This is to be strictly confined to the Regiment," *Frau Brander* said.—She had a nervous habit of screwing up her short-sighted eyes, which some people took for a forbidding frown—"It is much pleasanter when we have no outsiders."

As the military in *Stelnitz* kept rigidly aloof from all civilian society, and only mixed once a year at the big regimental ball, the *Frau Oberst* did not often have to suffer intrusions from other circles. She had lived so exclusively among soldiers, that some people declared the sight of a black coat frightened and distressed her. She certainly would have found nothing to say to a civilian.

The next call provided *Patience* with even more amusement.

"I do hope *Frau Hauptmann Mendl* will not be at home," *Frau Trenberg* said anxiously, as they mounted another flight of bare wooden stairs. "She has such a sharp tongue that she usually says something unpleasant about somebody." Then, afraid lest she had been uncharitable, she added hastily, "But it is not her fault, poor thing. She has no children, and that is quite enough to embitter her."

They now stood before a large brown door. It was festooned with ropes of dusty, imitation leaves, which also edged a tablet bearing the words: "*Gruss Gott tritt ein, Bring Glück herein!*" In

the panels of the door were two round holes, about twice the size of penny pieces.

As the bell shrilled loudly through the flat, a piano stopped abruptly, and after an interminable wait, a small and extremely untidy servant-girl appeared, wiping her hands on a dirty check apron. She took the cards in a damp paw, and retreated hastily, shutting the door behind her. In a few minutes one of the shutters in the little round windows was pushed back, and an eye appeared in the aperture. It surveyed the visitors carefully, then withdrew, and the shutter was replaced. After another wait, the capless servant reappeared. "*Gnädige Frau* was sorry, she was not well enough to receive visitors."

They retreated down the stairs, Patience almost speechless with disgust. "How terribly rude!" she ejaculated, "to be obviously in, then to keep us waiting on the door-step while she inspects us, and eventually to send us away!"

But Frau Trenberg was quite unruffled. "There is nothing to be offended at," she said. "With us it is not customary to receive visitors just because we happen to be at home."

"Then the servant ought to have said at once her mistress was not in," Patience insisted.

"Why should she? In that case someone might have been sent away whom she particularly wanted to see. We like to have the choice of whom we will receive and whom not, and nobody would dream of being offended if they are sent away."

Patience puckered her forehead, and then burst out laughing. "After all it was too funny for words!" she exclaimed. "They write up on the

door that we are to step in and bring happiness with us, and then they shut us out—examine us through eye-holes, and send us away.”

The *Frau Major* joined quite good-humouredly in her merriment, and Patience turned impulsively to her. “Whatever I find fault with or make fun of, I shall always think you are the kindest, best person imaginable!”

“My dear little *Herzchen!*” *Frau Trenberg* murmured, the ever-ready tears of emotion rising to her eyes, “you know I do not mind what you say, and I am not at all surprised that an elegant, spoilt young thing like you, should find much in our little town that is funny and queer. But one thing you know, and that is that your old *Tante Trenberg* loves her sweet little *Herzchen.*”

She squeezed Patience's arm, and for one moment the girl thought she was going to be embraced in the middle of the street. They had, however, arrived at the house of *Frau Hauptmann Winkmar*—the mother of the pretty *Irmgard*, and the wife of the corpulent, red-faced Captain—so there was no opportunity for further endearments.

Patience was introduced to a good-looking woman, far better groomed, and more tastefully dressed than the other ladies of the regiment whom she had met. She called to her daughter, who came in wearing a minute apron edged with lace, and a large bow in her dark hair. After making a deep curtsy to *Frau Trenberg*, she drew Patience into the alcoved window, while the ladies sat on the sofa, talking in animated undertones, interspersed with frequent gestures.

“I am so glad you have come to Stelnitz,” *Irm-*

gard exclaimed gushingly. "This is such a little nest that one longs for something new—it is too small even for a theatre or an opera. Let us sit down here;" and she drew Patience on to a seat placed upon a raised platform in the bow, devised in order to command the fullest view of the street. Patience had noticed this contrivance in all the houses: the lady's chair and work-table invariably so arranged that while the busy fingers worked, the busy eyes could follow all that was happening; and frequently this was made easier still by double mirrors, fixed on to brackets outside the window, reflecting everything in both directions.

"Are you very excited about the dance, and what are you going to wear?" Irmgard asked, her bright eyes taking in all the details of Patience's attire. Then, without waiting for a reply, she launched into a full description of her own toilette, how she and mamma had made it themselves, how much the stuff cost per metre, and how it was copied from a model in Gerson's shop in Berlin. "But I expect your dress will be much smarter," she concluded, "you have such lovely things," and she slipped her arm through Patience's, and stroked her large muff admiringly. "You know I think you are sweet—and what a beautiful hat that is, and how do you wave your hair?—Have you met any of the *Leutnants*? For which one do you think you will *schwärm*?—I must draw that curtain just an inch—there is little Leutnant von Reck standing by the third tree opposite. He promenades up and down in front of this window every day.—"

"Irmgard, dear, *gnädige Frau* says she must be going——" the ladies had risen to their feet. Irmgard dropped a deep curtsy, casting her fine black eyes down demurely, and Patience made her adieux.

"We shall all meet at the Casino on Thursday," Frau Trenberg said. "I suppose Irmgard will be turning all the poor *Leutnants'* heads!"

"Oh, no, *gnädige Frau*," that young lady said modestly, a becoming blush tingeing her pink and white complexion, "but the Mees and I are going to be great friends," and she squeezed Patience's hand, and escorted her visitors to the door.

Outside, Patience drew in her breath. "To think that I have only known her for ten minutes, and she has already poured half her affairs into my ears," she thought to herself.

"Irmgard is a very pretty young girl," Frau Trenberg observed as they hurried home—the Herr Major must at all costs not be kept waiting for his midday meal.—"Many of the young officers pay her court, but I think she will have some difficulty in getting a husband."

"Why?" Patience inquired. "She is much the prettiest and smartest girl I have seen here."

"Ah, those are just the sort of girls who sometimes get left," the Frau Trenberg said sagely. "Irmgard is a dear child, but she has too ready a tongue, and too expensive tastes. The *Leutnants* will flirt with her, but they will not marry her. And her mother is so courageous in misfortune that it will be terrible if she has that cross to bear as well."

"Perhaps she will be thankful to keep her daughter with her."

"No mother is thankful when her daughter does not marry," Frau Trenberg affirmed. "I feel convinced my darling child will have a husband and several babies when the pretty Irmgard is still single. You notice at the dance—she will be far too conspicuous and talkative. Of course our gentlemen do not like that sort of thing in their wives."

The day of this much-talked-of dance had at last arrived. Adelheid flitted about in a condition of almost palpitating excitement, and could think of nothing but the joy of dancing with her idol.

The entertainment was to begin at seven o'clock, and the Major stated that the ladies must be ready to start shortly after six. "The Colonel is very particular about punctuality," he added.

"Yes, and *Herzchen* has to be introduced to many of the ladies," Frau Trenberg said.

They therefore drank their "four o'clock *Kaffée*" half an hour earlier, so that, as Adelheid remarked, even if there were accidents, they might be ready in time. But as they sat round the table with its gaily embroidered cloth, its steaming coffee-pot, and the basket of home-baked cakes and fancy rolls, more talking than eating was accomplished. Patience had not yet learnt to consume food at any and every conceivable hour, and Adelheid was possessed with what her mother called "ball-fever." It must be a very disturbing complaint, Patience thought, for she nearly burned off all her hair with the curling-tongs, and was hot and flustered by the time she arrived in her pink muslin frock. Ber-

tha, the little servant, was rushing from one room to the other, helping and admiring—" *Lieber Herr Gott!* how wonderfully beautiful *gnädiges Fräulein* looks! Heavens, how sweet is Fräulein Adelheidchen! Just like a rose-bud!"

The Major stood in the passage shouting, "Schmidt, you old camel in the wilderness, why haven't you brought me my first *Garnitur*? And where the devil are my dance spurs?"

Patience stood in front of her glass and laughed. How amusing and novel it all was! She had never before felt such a thrill of anticipation, such an intense consciousness of being alive and young. She examined her reflection critically: yes, that *charmeuse* satin fitted wonderfully well—it was a pity you might not go *décolleté*, it somehow seemed wrong to be going to a dance in a high neck.

Next door, in the large, bare connubial chamber of the Trenbergs, Bertha was doing up the last hook of the *Frau Major's* blue velvet "Reform" dress. "Now, Berthachen, do I look all right? I must not wear out my best dress before your wedding."

Then loud shrieks of laughter from the delighted Bertha, "*Gnädige Frau* looks fine, and now this grand large brooch in the front. Why, it is as big as one of my pans! May I call Schmidt and the new stable boy? They do so want to see the ladies in their grand clothes."

The Major, who had been rattling off waltzes in the salon, now rushed out. "Wife, wife, are you ready at last? No more dawdling, we must start at once. Schmidt, thou God-forsaken fool, my cloak and goloshes!"

A general scrambling into wraps, snow-boots,

and mufflers ensued. Frau Trenberg and her daughter were unrecognisable bundles, their heads swathed in veils and shawls. To their distress, Patience declared her long fur coat sufficient covering.

At last they were ready to start. "Good-night, children!" the Major said affably, waving to Bertha and Schmidt. The latter stood rigid, his hands on the seams of his trousers—the attitude he always assumed when any member of the family addressed him; Bertha giggled, and wished them all "much amusement."

As they walked through the crisp night air, Adelheid slipped her arm through Patience's, "*Herzchen*, I am suffocating with excitement!" she whispered.

Patience laughed lightly: the little thing was of course ridiculously emotional, still even she felt strangely elated and buoyant. It was difficult to believe that she had ever felt languid, bored, and weary; but then that had been in a previous existence, when she had yawned through interminable dinners, wedged in between dull or *blasé* creatures—creatures who had forgotten the meaning of youth and laughter.

They had left the Lessingstrasse, with its rows of trees, and its clean, white stone houses—so imposing without, so simple within—and were now in the old part of the town. Sloping roofs and odd-shaped little towers stood out against the frosty sky, lights twinkled brightly behind lattice windows, and in the shops with their swinging sign-boards. Here, in a brilliant illumination, sausages of every sort and description were appetisingly displayed, festooned or laid out upon white tiles; further on was Café Stein, with its huge plate-glass

windows, its rows of small tables, its warm atmosphere of beer and smoke. Usually some of the officers might be seen, drinking or playing billiards, but to-night no smart uniforms were visible—they were all congregated in the Casino.

“Here we are!” the Major exclaimed, plunging into a doorway. Orderlies and soldier-servants were standing about, a *Krümpewagen** with a soldier on the box, drove up, a group of officers were mounting the uncarpeted stairs, talking and laughing.

Patience felt her companion's grasp tighten; she herself was strangely excited, “As if I were a green young thing, who had never been out in her life,” she thought.

At the top of the stairs they had to make their way through a crowd of uniforms. Frau Trenberg and her daughter shuffled quickly past—perhaps they were not anxious to display themselves unnecessarily in their unbecoming wraps—and hastened to the refuge of the ladies' cloak-room. Patience, however, glanced curiously round; immediately her eye alighted upon a massive, square-shouldered figure towering above the others: a white-gloved hand was raised in salutation, then the door shut upon her, and upon the Major's shouted injunction, “Wife, don't be long tittivating; we must go in at once.”

She had a vague impression of piles of shawls, clouds, and cloaks, rows of goloshes and snow-boots, mummified figures emerging from their cov-

* A carriage belonging to cavalry or artillery regiments, drawn by cast horses, which is at the disposal of the officers and their families.

erings, salutations exchanged, and then Frau Trenberg, after an anxious and admiring inspection of her charges, passed with them into the sea of uniforms waiting outside.

The Major, immaculate and youthful in his dark blue uniform, his breast adorned with a row of decorations, offered his arm to his wife. She looked almost like his mother, with her fat, spreading figure, her kind face lined, and her brown hair whitened by the labour and cares he had shifted from his own shoulders on to hers. She gave him a look of affectionate pride as she laid her poor, overworked hand on his sleeve, "Karlchen, you are younger than ever this evening!" she whispered.

He smiled indulgently, but did not give her the word of appreciation she longed for: in fact, he thought she looked rather dowdy, and did not trouble to reflect that she hardly ever spent anything upon herself or her clothes.

"Come along," he said, "Predow and Rabenstedt are conducting the girls."

These two cavaliers had already taken possession of Adelheid and Patience, and arm-in-arm the cavalcade made its way along the narrow, bare passage to a door at the opposite end.

"I have arranged with Oberleutnant Reuter, I may take *gnädiges Fräulein* in to supper," Rabenstedt said eagerly to Patience.

"Is all that settled beforehand?"

"Of course; the tables have to be arranged most carefully according to precedence by the officer who has it in his charge; then the plans must be submitted to the colonel, and he frequently upsets the whole thing."

A roar of voices burst upon them, and conversation ceased abruptly as they advanced into the long, lofty room—the ball-room of the 290th Infantry Regiment. At one end, on a raised platform, were the musicians, a section of the band Patience had heard play on the market-place. Three full-length oil paintings—inferiorly executed—of the three Kaisers, looked down upon the scene; and many photographs of royal and distinguished personages connected with the regiment, were dotted over the drab and gold walls.

But Patience's whole interest was centred upon the crowd, swarming, gesticulating, talking loudly, —a crowd which somehow appeared twice as large as it really was. She saw long vistas of uniforms, the glint of buttons, epaulettes and medals, with never a black coat among them, and only here and there the light splash of a woman's dress.

"There is the *Frau Oberst*, we must say good-evening at once."

Patience found herself in the wake of her host and hostess, curtseying to the plain Frau Brander, who looked plainer still in a sad-coloured garment, the exact shade of her face. The colonel was standing by her side. He was good-looking, erect, and well set-up; but Patience received the impression of a man pompous, and narrow-minded, time-serving and petty, a man who, she instinctively felt, was the social inferior of his unattractive, nervous, ill-dressed wife.

And then Patience was taken round to all the ladies—those whom she already knew she must greet, and to the others she must be introduced. Frau Winkmar, in a tasteful black gown made by

her own clever fingers, gave her a smile and a few amiable words: Irmgard was at the other side of the room, longing to speak to Mees Saile. *Frau Major* Mendl, the lady of the festooned and eye-holed door, was in a gracious mood, and said condescendingly she regretted a bad headache had prevented her receiving the ladies. In reality she hated the English: her husband had once ventured a mild flirtation with an Irish girl at Baden-Baden, since when his wife always spoke of "perfidious Albion."

One lady was particularly noticeable. She had on an ultra-fashionable gown, made by an obviously inferior dressmaker, and Patience thought how far preferable unambitious simplicity was to this bungled modernity. As the *Freifrau* Elsbeth von Remmingen und Garstein, she considered herself the *élite* of the regiment. After her first husband died, she married his brother, because, people said, he was the last Remmingen, and she thought no other family good enough. In her own opinion she was very broad-minded, for she treated the members of the regiment who were not "noble" with a kind toleration, and even in some instances, with a gracious friendliness.

On this particular evening, however, Patience accorded only a very fleeting attention to the married ladies. She had made her last curtsey to the *Frau Oberstleutnant* von Ehrich—a gross-looking woman, with untidy hair and a loud voice—and was at last free to cross the room on Rabenstedt's arm, and mingle with the younger portion of the assembly.

All the officers now crowded round to be intro-

duced; they seemed to Patience a never-ending stream, as one after the other clicked his heels and bowed before her. She felt she had under-estimated the size and importance of a German infantry regiment.

A ring of admirers surrounded Irmgard. The frock whose whole history Patience had heard, showed off her tall slimness, and a blue ribbon was wound in and out of her thick brown hair. She was laughing and talking, fanning herself and firing glances at the men from her bright, dark eyes.

Patience, also, was the centre of a group of young officers. Herr von Sassecwitz, the Regimental adjutant, with his shaven head, his eyeglass, and his beautiful tapering hands, the admiration of everybody; little Leutnant Retzingk, smaller and fairer even than Predow, with a childish face and a bad reputation; Oberleutnant Brehm, a vast barrel of a man, the butt of the regiment, good-natured and greedy; and of course the faithful Rabenstedt, close at her elbow.

"How pretty Fräulein Winkmar looks!" she exclaimed, glancing across at the vivacious Irmgard.

A chorus of voices was immediately raised: this was evidently a point much under discussion.

"She is pretty enough if it were not for her figure," Sassecwitz said.

"Yes, a long thin stick is not *my* taste," Retzingk drawled.

"It is not that I mind," Rabenstedt interposed hastily, afraid lest Patience might think aspersions were cast upon her own willowy proportions, "but Fräulein Irmgard is always playing to an audience; one never feels she is natural."

"Now the little Stoll is a girl after my heart," Brehm panted in his hoarse voice, half-stifled in fat, "small and soft and round, and such a jewel. Why, she cooks everything at home, even the fine dinners they give during the winter."

"That's the thing for Brehm," Rabenstedt exclaimed. "The one road to his heart is through his stomach."

"A pretty over-grown road," Sassewitz said with a laugh.

"Do you remember, *Dickerchen*, that mayonnaise she made, and the goose stuffed with chest-nuts?" Retzingk asked with a wink. "Certainly Fräulein Stoll is the prettiest, most charming young girl in Stelnitz!"

Patience looked across at this epitome of German desirableness. The much-vaunted Ilse was holding her court with an air of self-satisfied superiority, half-pert and half-coy. She was so fair that her eyebrows and lashes were barely discernible; and the hair brushed neatly and tightly back from her plump, round face, was nearly the same colour as her skin, and her white woollen frock. Patience seemed to see her through an atmosphere of roast goose and mayonnaise, that in the men's eyes formed a halo round her flax-coloured head.

At this moment there was a general move at the upper end of the room.

"We are going in to supper now," Rabenstedt said, offering Patience his arm.

"Do we have supper first, before any dancing?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, it is the best way of bringing *Stimmung* into the affair. After supper everyone is

more disposed to be gay, and to enjoy themselves."

A long line was formed; at the head the higher officers, with the most important ladies, apportioned strictly according to precedence, tailing down to the *Leutnants* with the four young girls, and followed by the large crowd of unattached males.

Adelheid was just behind on Herr von Sassewitz's arm. She stepped forward, and whispered hastily in Patience's ear, "Is it not terrible that 'he' is not taking me in? He did all he could, but the adjutants had to have ladies first."

"How funny," Patience said, turning to Rabenstedt, "I thought this was quite an informal little dance, and yet such a fuss is made about precedence!"

"Of course, however small and informal an entertainment is, such things have to be strictly adhered to."

"But I should have thought the young people might have chosen whom they liked?"

"They might, I suppose, but the Colonel is a tremendous stickler. Wait till the big ball, you will see what a fuss he makes then. I believe he looks up the history and pedigree of everyone of the guests so as to give each one exactly the amount of deference and prominence due to him or her."

The Infantry Regiment Prinz Johann Albrecht von Plettenburg was exceedingly proud of its dining-room. The walls were thickly covered with the antlers and horns of animals shot by its officers, while even the huge candelabra was made of them. A large cupboard with glass doors was filled with regimental trophies—mostly souvenirs of the Franco-Prussian war, in which the 290th had taken

an active part—bullets, mementoes of fallen comrades, a broken sword, and some pieces of regimental plate. On a shelf running round the wall was a fine collection of old pewter.

At the middle table, under the antlered candelabra, sat the Colonel with the wife of the *Oberstleutnant*, while the *Etatsmässiger*, Herr von Drossau, had the honour of conducting the *Frau Oberst*. The other chief members of the regiment filled up the remaining space, husbands and wives being carefully interchanged. At the next table sat the Captains and their spouses, thus grading downwards, through married lieutenants to the young girls and their cavaliers, who were seated at the end of the room with a large crowd of unappropriated subalterns.

Patience glanced down the simply-arranged table. Each person had two plates, one on top of the other, a knife, fork and spoon. Bottles of cheap red and white wine were dotted about at short intervals, and the only attempt at decoration was a single rose placed by each lady's glass. The mass of uniforms, and the animation of the scene, gave it, however, a glamour of its own. Not for one instant did Patience miss the old silver and crystal, the trails of delicate flowers, or the other luxuries to which she was accustomed. Mess waiters, and soldiers ordered specially for the occasion, hurried backwards and forwards; the din of voices, clink of glasses, and shouts of laughter soon swelled into a deafening roar, while the temperature rose to such a degree that the English girl, despite her light attire, felt the blood rushing to her head.

On her right sat Oberleutnant Brehm. His

vast body prevented him from attaining any close proximity to the table, and a fire of chaff was already descending upon him from his comrades.

"*Dickerchen*, would you like a second chair?"

"There are three more bottles up at this end; *Dickerchen* will manage them all!"

Brehm smiled with imperturbable good-temper, and seemed neither embarrassed nor annoyed by these playful sallies. "All right," he said blandly, "I have never yet refused a bottle of good wine!"

"It is a shame we may not have champagne," Predow grumbled. "We are not even allowed any *Mattias Müller*."

"I do not complain," Brehm observed, his good-natured little eyes twinkling above pouches of fat. "If I cannot get *Sekt*, I am content to drink *Rüdersheimer* or beer all evening."

Rabenstedt turned to Patience. "Our Colonel is very keen upon the simple life," he explained. "He is down upon any luxury or extravagances in his regiment. Leutnant Retzingk is very rich, and he kept several horses and a smart English dog-cart, until the Colonel made him give them up."

"Why?" Patience inquired.

"Because he quite rightly says that the strength and efficiency of our *Offizierkorps* depends upon our maintaining the economical simplicity Bismarck praised so highly. The moment we give ourselves over to the extravagances creeping in everywhere else, we shall degenerate from our high standards."

The mess waiters handed round a ragout with

potatoes and spinach. "You see, *gnädiges Fräulein*," he added, "where should *I* be if our Colonel allowed extravagance in the regiment? I could not even afford to cook myself appetising little dishes, but should have to go supperless to bed!" He laughed at her gaily, showing his strong white teeth. His impecuniousness, which, Patience reflected, would have been appalling to the men she knew, he seemed to regard as a huge joke for everybody to enjoy.

Her neighbour on the other side was entirely absorbed in the pleasant business of stuffing his huge carcass with food and wine. She was amazed at the row of empty bottles which bore witness to his prowess, and at the unruffled calm with which he despatched a large second helping of ragout, though a volley of personal witticisms was being fired upon him.

"How nice it is to see *Dickerchen* take such care of his figure!"

"It is sad that he stints his appetite, but we must all suffer to be beautiful!"

"When he gets his Captaincy we shall have to procure a *Nilpferd* for him to ride!"

And Patience realized with a shock that this vast mass of fat was only a lieutenant, and probably not more than thirty!

She turned hurriedly to Rabenstedt. "Yes, I think we set far too great store upon money and show, and I know in England we have grown to consider luxuries as necessities."

"How glad I am to hear you say that," he exclaimed, turning to her eagerly; "I thought our simple ways would not please you."

"Why not? I have enjoyed everything hugely since I have been here."

"That is because you are so charming, and have shown so much sympathy for our life and customs. The first moment we met, I knew we should understand one another." He helped himself to a large slice of venison, and a plateful of stewed fruit. "I have been thinking of you all the time," he added tenderly.

"Rabenstedt has been giving *gnädiges Fräulein* German lessons," Brehm said, generously filling up Patience's glass from the bottle in front of him, and winking facetiously at Predow.

"*Gnädiges Fräulein* speaks German so perfectly that one can only admire and wonder!" Predow cried, lifting his glass. "*Prosit gnädiges Fräulein!*" and he bowed to Patience.

She thought this drinking of healths an amusing but slightly onerous custom. Everybody, she found, before touching their wine, lifted their glasses, smiled and bowed to one another: it was quite a long and an obviously important business.

Adelheid, seated disconsolately at the opposite end of the table, let her eyes wander in the direction of the "irresistible Diedrich," while she murmured interjections to Herr von Sassecwitz's long recitals. The latter did not notice her abstraction, but merely thought what an appreciative listener she was, and how brilliantly he talked. Yes, she was certainly a very charming young girl; he wondered what dowry the Trenbergs would give her——

The dissipated young Retzingk was flirting outrageously with Irmgard. He was showing her a

little heart attached to his gold curb bracelet, and his small fair head and her dark one were very close together. "She's looking deucedly handsome this evening," he was reflecting. "She has got a far better complexion than Lizzi, but then she doesn't have to stand in a stuffy shop all day."

Ilse was carrying on a coyly-coquettish campaign with her father's adjutant, Leutnant von Marburg. Her conversation was a blend of pert personalities and virtuously domestic reflections. "I saw you, you wicked man, going into the 'Golden Grapes.' You cut poor little me entirely! I was buying vegetables for preserving. I found one woman who sells them for half the usual price, and you should see the results of my labours now—three dozen bottles of sour beans and cucumbers, two dozen of my special recipe for sweet cucumbers——"

Marburg beamed delightedly. He was far too chivalrous to notice that she had white eye-lashes; he only felt that she was a thoroughly nice girl.

By the time the third course—pink and yellow ice—had been served, the *Stimmung* was as hilarious as anyone could have wished. At last the Colonel rose. Frau von Ehrich, who wanted to flirt and dance with the *Leutnants* instead of listening to the Colonel's long-winded and pedantic dissertations, was eager to adjourn; and soon the procession was formed again, and everyone poured back into the ball-room.

Here the ceremony of wishing *Gesegnete Mahlzeit* occupied considerable time. The girls went dutifully round, curtsying to all the married ladies; there was a bowing, a clicking of heels, a kiss-

ing of hands, and the reiterated word *Mahlzeit!* *Mahlzeit!*

Patience felt as if her hand would drop off, so incessantly was it claimed as one officer after another came up to repeat the customary formula.

At last the band struck up a waltz, and the couples sorted themselves again. As Rabenstedt put his arm round Patience's waist, he bent low over her. "Now the evening is beginning. I feel as if I had waited for this moment all my life!"

"What a splendid pair they make!" Frau Trenberg whispered to the sympathetic Frau Winkmar. "Both so tall and handsome! And one can see Rabenstedt is head over ears in love! Before, I thought he was paying court to my darling child, but then all the gentlemen are devoted to her. Look at Herr von Sassewitz—he looks as if he would like to eat her up! The Sassewitzes have a beautiful property in Pomerania—perhaps the darling might do worse—though of course I would only have her make a love match."

"I did not think Herr von Sassewitz contemplated marriage," Frau Winkmar interposed. "I hear he has some entanglement with a little dress-maker's assistant in the town."

"Oh, they all have that," Frau Mendl chimed in. "As I always say, the one thing is to shut one's ears and one's eyes. I always do so with the soldier-servants and the maids. Otherwise one could not keep a single one."

Patience had given herself up to the sheer joy of motion—surely never before had she realized what dancing could mean? The floor was excellent, and—far more important—so spaciouly unencumbered that the couples swam round with a

glorious freedom from bumps and collisions. Her partner danced with a smoothness and precision, a feeling for music and motion, a lightness and ease, which amazed her in such a massive, square grenadier of a man. Luxuriously resting in his arms, she half shut her eyes, and saw the pink, blue, and white of the girls' frocks wafted past, the more serious draperies and the ampler forms of the young married women—Captains' and Lieutenants' wives, who though perhaps only brides of a year, had already developed matronly proportions—the rows of dowagers seated against the wall, their hands clasped over their plump figures, their eyes eagerly watching the dancers, and by the door a large glittering mass of uniforms, waiting to seize the first disengaged partner.

"You dance superbly!" Rabenstedt said, holding her so tightly that the brass buttons of his uniform pressed against her, and his breath stirred her hair. "I feel I could go on for ever!"

The alluring rise and fall of the fine old waltz seemed to sweep them off their feet. Patience felt exhilarated, intoxicated, carried out of herself. All her restrained joy of living, and exuberance of youth, all her caged animal spirits, and subdued senses, were breaking loose and swamping her. She would hardly have felt surprised if this great strong man had lifted her up, and carried her away, or if he had squeezed all the excited breath out of her body. It is fairly certain that, had the secluded little corners and sitting-out nooks of an English ball been provided, the two would have fallen into one another's arms, and Patience's fate would have been sealed there and then. As it was, she found herself seated at a long table in the din-

ing-room, wedged in between Rabenstedt and Predow, large glasses of beer before each one of them, and vistas of hot faces and beer-glasses stretching away into the distance. With an abrupt fall she seemed to have dropped from glowing rapture to a very material and rather unæsthetic reality. The strong pungent smell of beer steadied her senses, and she looked round her again with restored equilibrium. She was to discover, however, that the German can make love in any circumstances, even those that to the average Englishman would appear the most unsuitable. Hemmed in by noisy people, between long draughts of Pilsner, Rabenstedt poured into his companion's ear a stream of enthusiastic, laudatory comments, tender confidences, intimate accounts of his life and doings, his aspirations and sentiments. Patience's heart involuntarily swelled: "How deeply he must feel for me," she thought, "to confide in me so unrestrainedly after such a short acquaintanceship." She was rather jarred, however, by the open manner in which his comrades commented upon his attentions.

The "irresistible Diedrich," of whom Stelnitz said "he cannot speak to a woman without coquetting with her," called across to Retzingk: "Look, the heavy battery has brought up all the guns and is firing them off. Bang! Bang! Do you hear a great noise, *gnädiges Fräulein*?" he added, turning his fair and impertinent little face on Patience.

She reddened angrily, but replied with great coolness, "Yes, you speak much more loudly here than we would dream of doing in England."

"Bravo!" Retzingk cried, clapping his hands. "Our *Diedrichchen* has been scored off by the beautiful daughter of Albion! *Prosit, gnädiges Fräulein!*" and he bowed to Patience, and lifted his glass.

"*Diedrichchen* should confine himself to the little fishes," Rabenstedt said with complete good-humour. "If he annoys the Mees, she may put him into her pocket!" And he squared his own vast shoulders, and smiled at Patience with his habitual gay assurance.

"I don't believe it would be possible to snub him," she thought. "He would jump up again and laugh at one."

At last there was a move; chairs were pushed back, arms offered and the assembly again poured out of the dining-room, leaving its tables laden with empty glasses, and its atmosphere of beer and smoke.

A slow, solemn and sedate set of lancers was now danced, in which the fat dowagers and their medal-laden spouses also took part. Frau Trenberg, gratified and beaming on the Colonel's arm, cast a beneficent glance at the young peoples' *Carré*. Her beloved Adelheid, however, had eyes for no one except Herr von Predow, who stood at her side, toying with his small upturned moustache and marking the time with a gentle swaying of his slim, small-waisted body.

Patience's partner was the regimental adjutant, Herr von Sassewitz, while the pretty Irmgard and Rabenstedt were their *vis à vis*. Every time they met in the ceremonious figures—the deep bowings and curtseys—Rabenstedt pressed her hand fer-

vently, and Irmgard whispered arch remarks in her ear. It seemed as if the whole regiment were taken into her confidence; but her former sensation of annoyance had given place to one of oddly satisfied complacency: she was now ready to relinquish her national reticence for the gratifying atmosphere of importance which surrounded her on every side. She had never been considered, appreciated or admired in her own home; well, she would take her meed of it all now, even if it meant being placed in a glass house, inspected, discussed, examined by curious eyes. She was put in a thoroughly good temper with herself, and she was ready to show an answering responsiveness to the entire community who had given her appreciation and enjoyment. "After all," she reflected, "it is sheer affectation to pretend one does not like to hear nice things about oneself, and it is really a blessing that compliments are not considered bad form here, and one can therefore listen to them without being offended."

This was at the beginning of the evening; by the end she had ceased to think coherently at all. She flew from one officer's arms to another, danced every instant while the music played, and when it ceased, was landed, breathless but inexhaustible, at a corner table in the dining-room, where a little court formed round her, and she actually pledged her admirers' healths in the formerly-despised Pilsner!

At last, at last she had her reaction; the antidote to the long, dull dinners at Colne House, to the elderly people, the subdued voices, the prosy conversation, the endless disquisitions on Art, the

utter absorption in it to the exclusion of herself and her interests.

She glanced round at the circle of neat, dark uniforms, with their high scarlet collars and glinting buttons, at the eager, animated faces, while the din of voices and laughter surged round her. She lifted her glass: "To the jolliest evening of my life!" she cried.

Every glass was clinked against hers in the midst of a stormy applause. Rabenstedt beckoned to a mess waiter. "We must send a picture post-card to celebrate the occasion," he said, selecting one from a pile. "Has *gnädiges Fräulein* got anybody in Old England to whom she would like to dispatch it?"

For one instant a vision flashed across Patience's mind of the beautiful, desolate dining-room at Colne House, with its exquisite carvings and pictures, and its atmosphere of dreary oppressiveness, of the expression of Mr. Thaile's face when this be-scribbled and hilarious memento of a frivolous evening should be handed to him—— Then she shut her lips tightly. "There is no one in England," she said. "You shall send the post-card to *me*."

"Thank Heaven," Rabenstedt whispered as he scrawled her address, "there must be no one in England of whom you think much."

By the time the post-card had made its round, there was not a pin's point of unoccupied space upon it, and Rabenstedt slipped it into the broad cuff of his *Ueberrock*. "I shall put it into the letter-box when I pass your house in the early morning," he said.

The Colonel and his wife now rose to their feet, the sign that the evening was over.

"What a shame!" Predow cried. "It is only half-past eleven."

"And it is just getting really *gemüthlich*," Brehm ejaculated, hastily swallowing the remains of his beer.

"The Colonel is anxious that these informal little entertainments should not be overdone," Sas-sewitz remarked, dropping the end of his cigar into a glass, and pulling down his uniform.

"Well, of course we shall remain on, and discuss everything," Retzingk said with a wink. "Do you not tremble, *gnädiges Fräulein*? Everybody will be torn to pieces."

"I shall be there to see that no word is said against you," Rabenstedt murmured in Patience's ear.

When at last, after the almost interminable ceremony of bidding good-night to everyone, from the Colonel and his wife down to the innumerable *Leutnants*, the party found itself, be-mantled and be-shawled, in the cold night air, Patience felt too upheaved to talk.

Frau Trenberg, her "Reform" dress pinned up round her ample middle—she scorned any suggestion of a waist as an unnatural coercion of nature—her goloshes slip-slopping over the pavement, slid a tentative little hand through her husband's grey-mantled arm.

"Karlchen," she whispered softly, "I was the proudest woman there to-night with such a smart good-looking husband, and such a sweet daughter."

"That's right, wife," he said amiably, "you may be glad you have not got a husband with a corporation like Winkmar or Brehm, who drink like fishes, and don't walk home with their families."

"Indeed I am," she answered humbly, quite convinced in her modest, self-effacing mind that she was indeed a most enviable creature.

In front the two girls walked close together, with hot faces, and shining eyes. "*Herzchen*," Adelheid murmured, squeezing her companion's hand, "was it not heavenly—glorious? I am sure now he loves me. He danced with me ever so often, and when he could not—for of course it would not be proper to engage one lady too many times,—his eyes followed me everywhere. The whole world somehow seems transformed and different!"

"Yes, yes," Patience said reflectively, "but perhaps other things besides love can make the world look different?"

But Adelheid shook her blonde head. "It is only love," she affirmed eagerly, "for us young girls love is the one thing in our lives."

The Major was fumbling with the latch-key. "Wife," he exclaimed impatiently, "you have forgotten to tell that camel of a Schmidt to put a lantern here, and now I have soiled my gloves."

"*Herzchen*," Adelheid whispered, as they stumbled upstairs in the dark, "I somehow feel as if we should always, always remember this evening—as if it will alter our whole lives."

"I wonder whether it will alter mine?" Pa-

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tience mused, locking her door upon herself and her thoughts. She examined long and curiously her reflection in the glass—the reflection of a tall, slim figure in a clinging primrose-coloured gown—a flushed young face, looking with eager expectation into a joyous, rosy future.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Adelheid and her mother were busy with their many household duties—cooking, preserving, sewing or ironing—the Major most willingly placed himself at the disposal of his English guest and showed her the sights of the town. He himself never seemed overburdened with work; but he was so quick and agile, both physically and mentally, that he did not give the impression of being either lazy or negligent. A colossal self-indulgence, fostered by his upbringing and his wife, prevented him, however, from doing anything which he found distasteful or tedious. He showed considerable skill and unbounded energy in the pursuit of those things which afforded him pleasure; but now that he had attained the rank of Major and was not actually forced to work hard, he idled through existence, flinging all drudgery, cares and responsibilities from him, to be picked up by his wife's tired hands and loaded uncomplainingly upon her own weary shoulders. He was universally popular—gay, good-humoured, amusing, with a joke and a smile for everybody. Even the soldier servants forgot his sudden outbursts of temper when they roared with laughter in the kitchen over the *Herr Major's* little witticisms. But it was to the *Frau Major* they went if they were ill or in trouble. She was never too busy or too tired to help those in need, and no beggar ever left her door empty hand-

ed. Secretly she wept many bitter tears over her husband's improvidence and idleness. The Colonel worked tremendously hard himself and expected his officers to follow his example. How would her husband ever get his regiment if he frittered away all his time? Of what avail would his undoubted talents and capabilities be if he obstinately refused to use them? She was always dreading the day when he would be obliged "to change his helmet for a top hat," as the saying is; when they would sink into the poverty and oblivion of the pensioned officer's existence. Occasionally she ventured a timid remonstrance, but he blazed at her the command he always issued when any uncomfortable topic was mooted: "I forbid any further mention of the subject." Then she wiped her eyes surreptitiously and smiled faintly at him; and at midday dinner when they all met, Patience thought how courteous and entertaining he was, the life of the party, and certainly, in his pale grey *Litewka*, the most decorative member of it.

He showed her all sorts of interesting things in the little town, and she looked forward to these morning walks with him when his wife and daughter were busy in the kitchen. It amused her to walk by his side and receive the obsequious salutes and salutations; the relieving guard passing, the shout "*Augenrechts!*" then the goose-step past, every eye turned rigidly in its socket towards them; the sentry shouldering arms as they approached, the detachment of privates under a non-commissioned officer, who hurried up, his heels clicked together, his hands on the trouser seams to report their destination—it all interested and entertained her.

"The whole town seems full of soldiers," she once said to her companion.

"It is," he replied. "The garrison is the most important part of Stelnitz, as it is of many small towns. Most of their prosperity would be gone if you took away the garrison. We provide them with trade, amusement, employment—and I do not think there is a town in Germany which would not welcome the advent of soldiers."

That morning he took her over the barracks, a vast stone building built round the huge barrack-yard. Here she saw the raw recruits being exercised and drilled—awkward, slouching peasants from the wilds of Posen and Silesia, who had laboriously to learn to use their bodies, and to some extent their minds. The youngest lieutenants, on whom the work devolved of superintending the recruits, crossed the yard hurriedly, and with rigid military precision reported to the Major: "Second battalion firing exercise!"

The Major waved them off with friendly graciousness, and Patience nodded to little Leutnant von Seking. She had talked with him at the dance, and had been pleased with his enthusiastic love of his work. Though he looked such a boy, he took his profession most seriously, and had, he informed her, evolved a system for teaching and managing the recruits, which he declared was most successful.

"It is wonderful to think that nearly every man in your country is taught to be a soldier," she said to the Major as she followed him up a flight of stone steps to the chief corridor of the building. "It is almost as if some vast mines were to be opened in the future, and one nation realized this and

trained all her men to be engineers, while other countries stood idly looking on, never foreseeing that, ignorant and unprepared, they could not stand a chance."

"There is no doubt about it that compulsory training has done miracles for us," the Major replied. "Many of the peasants come to us narrow-chested, underfed, ignorant louts. In a few weeks' time they have expanded and improved till you would not recognize them, and they return to their various trades infinitely better workmen for their military training."

Her eyes brightened. "How interesting! Please show me everything."

The Major smiled benignantly. It was quite amusing to act guide and showman to this vivacious, smart young girl. His wife and daughter had never seen the inside of the barracks, but then they had never expressed a desire to do so, besides the fact that their time was fully occupied with household affairs.

So Patience was shown all round. She saw the rooms where the soldiers slept, the neat bunk beds, the numbered lockers, and everywhere plenty of air and light. Then they penetrated down to the kitchens with their vast steaming cauldrons, from which quite a savoury odour emerged. The Major turned to one of the white-garbed soldier cooks, who stood rigidly at attention, a wooden spoon he was in the act of using, pressed to his trouser seam. "Give the young lady some of the soup to taste," he ordered. "*Zu Befehl Herr Major!*" and Patience found herself sampling an excellent broth composed of white beans and meat.

"I have eaten far less appetising soup in a seaside boarding house in England," she declared as they mounted the scrupulously kept stairs again, "I don't think your soldiers need complain."

"They do not very often," the Major said. "The socialistic papers take up isolated bad cases and make a lot of fuss, but my personal experience is that, on the whole, they are very contented and happy, and most of them look back with pleasure upon the time they served. This is my orderly-room. We will go in and disturb Rabenstedt."

He opened a door and Patience found herself in a bare room; a table piled with papers, a couple of cane chairs, and a vast map of the surrounding country, constituted its sole furniture. Rabenstedt, in a *Literoka* and high riding boots, was busily writing. At sight of the Major he jumped to his feet and stood rigid and erect, but his bright eyes looked past his superior officer and rested eagerly upon Patience.

"You see we have come to interrupt your work," the Major said, patting him jovially on the shoulder. "If you have about finished, you can join us. I have been showing *gnädiges Fräulein* the barracks, and now I thought of taking her to the fortifications."

Rabenstedt assented with alacrity, and soon the trio were stepping out gaily along the tree-bordered street. A sharp frost had silvered the branches and hardened the ground, while the white stone houses of the Lessingstrasse, shining against a blue sky, gave an air of prosperity to this modern portion of the town. Steinitz, originally an old fortress, still

possessed the encircling moat and walls, though much had been done to improve and enliven its residential quarters. A public garden bisecting it and joining at either end the path running round the walls, had been carefully laid out; even at this season it looked pretty and gay, and provided a favourite promenade for the inhabitants of the town. The artificial lake was frozen, the swans flapping their wings disconsolately on the bank, while the central fountain was transformed into a glittering cascade of icicles. Near by towered a tall granite column, surmounted by a bronze figure of Glory, and inscribed with the names of those brave comrades of the 290th who had fallen for their country in the Franco-Prussian war.

Patience and her companions had entered this garden from the Lessingstrasse, with its stuccoed houses and its vast stone barracks; they now emerged into the old untouched precincts, and Patience felt as if they had entered a different world. Narrow winding streets, rambling, russet-coloured houses—queer little windows shaped like eyes in their steeply-sloping roofs—corkscrew staircases climbing up the walls, and glimpses through carved archways of ancient courtyards. The houses crept right down to the protecting fortifications, and seemed to be gazing out with those lidded eyes in their sloping tiles over the stretches of flat land towards an advancing enemy.

“Stelnitz has seen many stormy times,” the Major said, pointing to a huge shell half buried in the wall, “Prussia’s artillery fired that.”

A narrow street constituted the sole means of ingress into the town. At its mouth, and backed

by the walls, was a circular building with slit windows and flat moss-grown roof.

"This is part of the fortifications and served to protect the entry into the town," the Major explained. "Now it is inhabited by a company of our regiment, and many of the married non-commissioned officers have their quarters here. They consider it quite the country, and are allowed to keep pigs and poultry at the back."

A metallic clang as the sentry presented arms and they penetrated into the courtyard. Here a line of soldiers, their helmets swathed in holland, were drawn up. The non-commissioned officer hastened to report: "Night march this evening direction Augusthöhe."

"Their covered helmets show they represent the enemy," the Major explained moving away.

Patience turned to Rabenstedt. "Each day I am here I am more impressed with the ordered militarism of everything. I now realize what is meant by 'a nation in arms.' Of course with us, if one went to Aldershot or any of the regular camps, I suppose it would be much the same, but after all there are very few of them, and here every little unimportant town seems to have its garrison."

"Oh, yes—Krolburg, about ten kilometres off, has two battalions of Infantry and a squadron of Cavalry; and Gentheim on the other side has a whole Uhlan regiment stationed there, and so it is everywhere."

"And you have all learnt to be soldiers."

Rabenstedt looked down at her, a more serious expression than usual upon his light-hearted face. "And we are proud of it. We officers may some-

times feel that we have to sacrifice much for the privilege of wearing our King's uniform, but we should not be real men—real German men—if we did not consider ourselves honoured to do so.”

She smiled at him, moved by his enthusiasm and fervour. The Major was still talking to the non-commissioned officer, the soldiers—sturdy, healthy-looking fellows—cast surreptitiously interested glances at their visitors; the breech-ends of heavy guns—their muzzles pointing through the thick walls—flanked them and the air was permeated with the odour of leather, accoutrements and metal. Outside they were practising the tattoo, then the bugle call “Lights out!”

“If I were a man I should be a soldier,” she said, her eyes glistening.

He moved a step nearer. “You can be a soldier's wife.”

The Major hurried up. “A thousand apologies, *gnädiges Fräulein*,” he exclaimed, “I had one or two orders to give. However, I hope Herr Rabenstedt entertained you.”

The eyes of the two met, his full of challenging meaning, hers of hasty disavowal, but there was no further opportunity for conversation.

On her return home, Patience was irritated and dissatisfied. She felt as if Rabenstedt was hurrying her over pleasant ground where she wished to loiter, and pushing her with deliberate intention into conditions for which she was not yet ready. But she was still ignorant of a certain type of German love-making which jumps with the utmost rapidity and abruptness to an apparent climax, there

to remain quite comfortably without any diminishing or increasing, until perhaps, external circumstances give a push in either direction.

From the first time they met, Rabenstedt had made love to her, and had showed her his enamoured condition with an eminently un-British frankness. But though they saw one another very often indeed, there was rarely any opportunity for uninterrupted or private conversation. German *convenances*, which hedge round the girls and men so carefully in all association that it is impossible for them ever to gain any real knowledge of one another, prohibited all intercourse except that carried on under the protecting eye of authority. Had it been permissible for Patience to walk and talk with Rabenstedt, unhampered by the presence of some neutralising chaperon, she might have attained a certain knowledge of the man who had captured her senses. As it was, she saw him always as the imposing centre of a crowd, towering above the others—a gay young Hercules, who laughed and took life in the light-hearted manner she had longed for in the dreary days of her solitude.

She pictured existence with him as one jolly, entertaining picnic; it never occurred to her that she might be expected to wash the dishes or carry the basket. Of course the standard of comfort was very modest, but she admired this simple stripping away of unessentials; and any absence of luxury at home, was more than made up for by the deferential respect accorded their class outside. She saw her progress through life on Rabenstedt's arm as one triumphal procession, accompanied by the blare

of military music and by the obsequiously admiring salutes of the crowd. And then she would make for herself a unique position in the regiment! She thought with pity of the poor women in their ill-fitting or unfashionable garments, spending all their time and thoughts on the kitchen and the larder. How could they expect or hope to keep their husbands' interest and passion for them alive? Of course the men, smart, socially spoilt, could find little in common with dull, badly-groomed wives, who had allowed their figures and minds to run to seed over a kitchen fire! She, however, with her smart clothes and her ready tongue, would lead the way, and show them that a woman must be pleasing to the eye, charming and amusing, if she wishes to hold her husband's affections. Even her father, morose and ill-tempered to his family, demanded this; how much more of an effect then would such attractions exercise upon her merry, enamoured giant? But the thought of Mr. Thailé suddenly cast a shadow over her rosy reflections. She knew he would oppose her marriage—any marriage she wished to make. And of course Rabenstedt was poor, and the bride of a German officer, she had been told, must always provide a dowry. Well, she was not going to allow such annoying questions to worry her! With the illimitable confidence of youth, she felt convinced that some means would be discovered of circumventing all difficulties. Besides there was always Aunt Cordelia.

Though Adelheid Trenberg had shown an unrestrained abandon in pouring her confidences into Patience's ear, the latter kept the above reflections rigidly to herself. She was by no means reserved,

but she experienced a certain embarrassment at this open wallowing in emotion and sentiment. She could hear her clothes, her belongings, and even her appearance commented upon with equanimity, but to have her most intimate affairs probed and pried into was a different thing altogether. Besides, to Adelheid's constant questions, "You do love him? You must adore him? Would you not love to be his wife?" she did not wish to give any reply. Apparently the girls here felt no shame in declaring their devotion to a man who had not confessed his love; but she, for her part, was determined to make no premature confessions.

One day Frau Trenberg and the two girls were invited to drink coffee with Frau Major Stoll. "It will be quite a big affair," her hostess said, "so you must make yourself smart, and put on a light blouse."

Patience smiled at the Teuton idea of a blouse and skirt constituting "smartness"; but she had already discovered that provided the upper portion is clothed in some lively pink, yellow, or blue garment—however irrelevant to the other half of the costume—the demands of even the most exigent are satisfied.

Having disburdened themselves of their hats, cloaks, and goloshes, they were received by Frau Stoll in her prim salon. In honour of the occasion all the gas jets were burning brilliantly, and the white china stove, built into the wall between the drawing-room and dining-room, had been stoked to its utmost limit. Most of the regimental ladies were assembled here, with the exception of the *Frau Oberst*—who was going out as little as pos-

sible this year—and one or two others, who also found themselves prevented on account of intimate family reasons.

After the round of curtseys had been accomplished, the two girls joined Irmgard and Ilse, who were standing demure and decorous in a corner. Ilse wore a minute striped silk apron, and disappeared at intervals to assist the servant-girl. At last a move was made to the adjoining room, where a long table was laid. Large plates of appetising cakes reposed upon a cross-stitch table-centre, while little gaily-coloured napkins were placed by the cups and saucers ranged down the table. Sprigs of fir decorated with dabs of cotton wool, lent an air of Christmas festivity to the scene. After the ladies were seated, strictly according to rank—Frau von Ehrich and Frau Trenberg on either side of the hostess—Patience found to her surprise that a special table was laid for the four girls in the adjoining room. The communicating doors were of course wide open, and here, separated from, but still under the watchful eyes of their mammas, the young ladies took their seats.

“Why does not everybody sit together?” Patience asked as the delicious coffee was handed round, and her plate piled high with cakes.

“But you would not have us sit with the married ladies?” Ilse cried in surprise. “Why, they have all sorts of married talk we may not hear!”

“And we have lots of things we do not want *them* to hear,” Irmgard chimed in.

“No, *Herzchen*, what queer ideas you have,” Adelheid added. “We young people are always kept quite separate.”

"I do wonder what they talk about?" Irmgard said, looking curiously across at the long table, from which a babel of voices arose.

"Oh, all sorts of things we ought not to know anything about," Ilse suggested.

As a matter of fact, the mammas were in the midst of a heated but very uninteresting discussion of the regimental dance.

"The Colonel is simply ridiculous, the way he mixes himself in everything!" Frau von Vorbach exclaimed. "He gave some of the *Leutnants* the most awful snubs for not dancing as he likes or not dancing at all."

"And many of them did not have a chance," Frau Oberleutnant Rangel interposed. "There were so few young girls that we married women had a fine time. At the big ball, when a lot of girls are invited, we shall not get any partners at all."

"Did you hear that the Colonel complained of the ladies being too smartly dressed?" Frau Mendl asked.

"Not possible!" Frau Trenberg ejaculated. "Why, I had on my old velvet which I made myself seven years ago and I only put on a little fresh lace."

"Most of the dresses had been seen pretty frequently before," Frau Stoll said. "Of course Frau von Remmingen is very fashionable, but I believe she has her costumes made very cheaply in the house."

"It would be more to the point if the Colonel, instead of pretending we women spend too much upon our clothes, prevented the men from drink-

ing champagne and gambling," Frau Mendl remarked in her acrid voice.

"It is a very difficult position both for the Colonel and his wife," Frau Trenberg said gently. She was wondering whether she would ever be called upon to fill this difficult but honoured position, or whether her husband's idleness would land them instead in the dreary obscurity of the pension list.

"He said many of the ladies must have bought new costumes for the occasion, and he could not continue these informal little entertainments in the regiment if they led to all sorts of expenses," Frau Rangel observed disgustedly.

"The Colonel is quite right in principle," Frau Trenberg replied. "He *must* maintain simplicity and nip in the bud any tendency to extravagance."

"I am sure *we* do not spend much on our wardrobe," Frau Stoll exclaimed. "My dear Ilse makes all her dresses herself—that sweet girlish-looking white frock she wore at the dance she had before she was confirmed, and the clever child lengthened it and made it look quite fashionable—but then all my children are wonderful with their fingers—little Ann Marie, though she is so small, can already cook quite nicely, and Trudchen helps me knit the stockings for the whole family."

Everybody looked resignedly interested and drew out their needlework from reticules carried on their wrists. Frau Stoll could talk of nothing but the virtues of her large family, and it was a well-known fact that she invariably brought conversation back from the most divergent and irrelevant subjects to the doings and sayings of her adored progeny. She added regularly to their number

every year, but though badly off and overworked, she never seemed to consider that her family might be big enough, and was thoroughly happy and contented with the existing state of things.

The assembly stitched away diligently, and conversation temporarily languished; every one wanted to discuss the scandalous behaviour of Frau von Erich, the black sheep of the regiment, who flirted outrageously with the young *Leutnants*, and was damaging her husband's career. But unfortunately the lady herself was present, so a stop was put to the most interesting topic available.

"I hear they are going to give '*Kabal und Liebe*' with new costumes and setting at Wentheim," Frau Winkmar observed, her fingers flying in and out of her huge piece of work—she was filling out in cross-stitch a sofa cover for Irmgard's prospective salon.

"Indeed," Frau Stoll said, "You really should hear my Ann Marie recite '*Die Glocke*.' The darling puts so much expression into her little lisping voice——"

"Is it true, Frau Trenberg, that Müelers are having a sale of aprons and house linen?" Frau Mendl asked hastily.

"Indeed it is," Frau Stoll chimed in. "Ilse has got some wonderful bargains there, but then the dear child has a perfect genius for getting things cheap. I always say the man who procures her for a wife may be congratulated."

The girls also were busily sewing, with the exception of Patience, who had never thought of bringing any needlework. As she looked at the

magenta flannel blotters, and the be-mottoed covers which were being perpetrated round her, she could not help feeling that, even sitting with idle hands, she was wasting her time less than the others.

"I shall never get all my Christmas presents finished," Irmgard sighed. "Really Ilschen, I cannot think how your mamma gets through such a tremendous amount of work. I am sure if I had nine children I should not make all their clothes and knit all their stockings besides managing the whole house."

"The Mamma enjoys it," Ilse said as she bustled out into the kitchen to see after further preparations. In a few minutes she reappeared carrying a wonderful ice meringue, while the servant followed with a tray of glasses and a bottle of wine.

This second collation, coming almost immediately after coffee and large quantities of cakes, Patience found most trying, but the rest of the assembly partook of it with the utmost relish; in fact the ice meringue was so much appreciated that it made a second round and was pronounced quite delicious.

"I believe in England they eat nothing at all," Ilse observed, as she noted with amazement the small atom of ice on Patience's plate. Assuredly housekeeping in Albion must be very economical, she reflected.

"Oh, Ilschen," Adelheid sighed desperately, "I cannot get the letters even. I wish I had not chosen such a long motto, but then it is beautiful:

"'Complain not of trouble and work do not fear,
It is beauteous to work for those who are dear.'"

Mamma will love to fix it on the wall behind her sewing-table."

Irmgard pushed her chair nearer to Patience. "I do wonder when Herr von Predow will ask for Adelheid's hand," she whispered. "Do you like him? He is very gay, I know—I have seen him several times coming out of a little house in the Sternstrasse—perhaps he cannot make up his mind to marriage, especially if——"

Here a chord was struck on the piano, all conversation ceased immediately, and Frau Winkmar's clear soft voice broke into Schubert's *Wanderer*.

Patience listened with delight. There was a musical comprehension, a depth and pathos in the rendering, aided by a discreet and musicianly understanding in Frau Mendl's accompaniment, that amazed the English girl. And she had imagined that these women had no thoughts or capacities beyond their kitchens and their families! She had seen them cooking and working while the men paraded their parlour-tricks, and all the time they themselves had far more than the average ability and talents.

It was nearly half-past seven when, after quite a varied concert, the party broke up. As she curtseyed to Frau Winkmar, Patience looked at her admiringly. "I must thank you for your lovely singing," she said, "I enjoyed it so much."

Frau Winkmar smiled rather sadly. "I am glad you liked it. I *used* to sing well, but now I have so little time and incentive, that I have almost given it up."

Patience suddenly remembered the red-faced, corpulent man who was her husband, and the cryp-

tic remarks Frau Trenberg had made about Frau Winkmar's sorrows.

"These poor women," she thought, "they have not even learnt their own worth, and have no idea of holding their own with the men." And she smiled confidently, as she pictured the revolution she would cause, and the triumphant object-lesson she would provide for these unappreciated and down-trodden wives.

CHAPTER VI

THE pink-shaded lights in Diedrich von Predow's apartments cast a rosy glow over everything. They illuminated the white fur rugs strewn on the parquet floor, the walls decorated with pictures of race-horses, ballet-girls and *Jugend* illustrations, the table littered with heavily embossed smoking appliances, letters, and photographs. Through a half-open door the bedroom beyond was visible—a canopied bed, and, let into the wall, a mirrored stand crowded with bottles, ivory-backed brushes, and manicure appliances.

The "irresistible Diedrich" himself was stretched on a divan in the sitting-room, a cigarette between his lips, a petulant expression upon his fair little face. Opposite him, almost swamping the spindly white Empire chair, sat Rabenstedt.

"It is all very well," Predow was saying, "but I hate making a decision. Decisions are almost as boring and unpleasant as sermons."

"As far as I can see, the decision has been made for you," Rabenstedt replied. "There is no misunderstanding your father's letter."

"No, confound it! It is ridiculous of Papa to make a fuss now. I am sure he has done himself well enough all his life, and he has never expected me to be a model of virtue or economy."

"That is all right, Diedrichchen—and as you

know I am no stickler—but don't you think you may have been overdoing things a trifle?" Rabenstedt cut off the end of a cigar reflectively and looked across at his friend.

"How do you mean? Because I am fond of the pretty little girls and sometimes have cosy little suppers here? Pah! Such things are not worth mentioning."

"No, but incidentally they represent a good deal of cash, especially when you give the pretty little things diamond brooches or gold watches."

"Well, *you* certainly manage more economically. They love you for your *beaux yeux*."

Rabenstedt laughed good-humouredly. "I have not got anything else, and perhaps it is just as well. But remember your father is very angry too over the amount you have spent on this flat."

"Yes, confound it, the bills have just come in, and virtuous Papa is tearing out his hair over the few little rags and bits of furniture I bought. The old gentleman cannot expect me to live in a bare garret."

"You certainly don't do that!" Rabenstedt laughed, looking round the rose-coloured nest. "I have told you what your rooms look like, and honestly, I think you overdo the luxury. I am sure there is not a lady in the regiment who has a dressing-table like yours, and you know the Colonel would be furious if he discovered such extravagances."

"Heavens! First I have the decision to make, then I have the sermon to swallow. What would my highly-virtuous friend have me do?"

Rabenstedt puffed at his cigar. "Do as your

father wishes—marry. He has promised that if you settle down he will pay all your debts and give you an ample allowance. What more can you want?"

Predow fidgeted impatiently, threw away his cigarette and picked up a long and rather soiled little glove from among the litter on the table. "I don't want to marry yet," he said.

"Why not? I thought you were in love with Adelheid Trenberg?"

"Hum—yes—I suppose I am." Predow swung the glove backwards and forwards. "The fact is, I don't want to be tied down to her now—I don't want to give up my freedom just yet."

"You don't want to give up Mizi, that's the fact!" Rabenstedt exclaimed. "If a virtuous girl of your own class—or your wife—were to lead you the dance that little vixen does, you would not stand it for one instant."

"Of course not. One does not marry a woman to be teased and thwarted and allured. One wants a wife to be even-tempered, amiable and obedient."

"Well, I am sure the little Adelheid has all these qualities, besides being thoroughly well brought up, and a sweet innocent young thing."

"Yes, yes, I suppose I shall marry her eventually," Predow said; then, suddenly raising himself, he added sharply, "By the way, I used to think you and she were in love with one another—before the rich English girl came and monopolized your attention? As her father's adjutant you had plenty of opportunities and you were constantly together."

Rabenstedt laughed lightly. "We always got

on very well, and I think her a good, tractable, charming young thing, but she is not exactly my style. Besides, she is head over ears in love with you."

Predow looked mollified, but still slightly suspicious. "Because you know," he remarked, sinking back on to the pink cushions, "I am not going to marry any girl who has the bloom off her. She must be absolutely fresh and innocent, and I must be the first man she has really loved. She must tremble at the kiss I press upon her lips, because it is her first initiation into the question of sex, and she must be able to think of me as the fount of all her knowledge."

Rabenstedt nodded his head. "To men with jaded appetites that is the chief gratification in marriage."

Predow was examining absent-mindedly his polished, pointed nails. "Yes, she is a dear, good little thing, and I am deucedly fond of her. I hope you don't think that I am not. But the fact is, I am damnably worried. First Papa sending me this angry letter and putting the pistol to my head, then a whole run of bad luck I have had—the old gentleman will have to stump up a tidy amount—and now the bother about settling with Mizi. She is such a violent little devil she is sure to make a scene. Confound it all, what a nuisance women are! Why can't they leave one alone?"

"Life would be pretty dull without them!"

"Yes, by the bye, what happened to your little friend Sophie, with the big blue eyes?"

Rabenstedt pulled himself slowly out of the rickety chair and crossed over to the window.

"Oh, there was no question of anything binding there. She knew I had no money to squander, but she was fond enough of me to share my poverty for a time. Then she got a post as waitress at Krolburg, and I have never heard anything of her since."

"What luck you have," Predow sighed enviously. "You don't gamble, you have no debts, and no women hanging on to you!"

"I have no money for any of these luxuries," Rabenstedt laughed. "If I had an allowance of—say, five thousand marks a year, I might behave very differently. But I have always known that unless I wished to 'go round the corner' and become a waiter in America I must practise rigid economy, and I have managed to keep off the rocks fairly successfully."

"And now you are going to marry a rich wife."

Rabenstedt looked at his companion sharply. "How is she rich?" he demanded.

"Of course, all English people are rich!" Predow declared. "Besides, one can see that this Mees Saile, with an impossible name like a game of cards, is running over with money. Look at her furs and her clothes! Why, that dress she wore at the dance fitted like a glove, and must have cost more than our young girls spend in a year. She is too much of a high-stepper for my taste. You will have to ride her on the curb, Helmuth. It is a good thing you are so big and strong!"

Rabenstedt showed his white teeth in a delighted smile. "She is colossally charming! A delightful high-spirited thoroughbred. I don't like them too tame. The most fiery, untractable woman

succumbs when she finds her master, and her proud submission is infinitely more attractive than the meek subservience of the timidly obedient bread-and-butter miss."

"That's all very well, but she gives her husband all sorts of trouble and annoyance first."

"Oh, no, make a woman cry and then kiss away her tears, and she will feed out of your hand ever afterwards. Woman has remained fundamentally stationary for many centuries. She is exceedingly elementary, if not primeval, and it is a known axiom that she loves best the man who beats and caresses her."

"May I ask if you are going to beat your English wife?" Predow inquired sarcastically.

"Do I beat even my mare Betty?" Rabenstedt fetched his sword from the passage, buckled it on, and then planted himself in front of Predow. "No, I shall manage her with kisses, and teach her what love really means. Then she will never want to look at anybody else, and she will be my devoted, obedient little wife for evermore!"

Predow sat up, yawned and stretched out his hand. "Well, *Prosit*, old fellow. Good luck to you in this risky enterprise. May the ground be paved with gold to make up for the broken knees!"

"It is no use jibing, Diedrichchen," Rabenstedt responded with unruffled good-humour. "You must put on helmet and *Waffenrock* and present yourself before the Herr Major Trenberg to ask for the honour of his daughter's hand in marriage. And remember your stern papa has only given you a very limited time in which to make up your mind, so the sooner you go the better—and colossally

thankful you ought to be that you possess a papa who will pay your debts."

Predow gave an impatient exclamation, and flung the long glove back on the table. "Yes," he said, rising languidly to his feet, "Stale chypre smells horrid—bread-and-butter is much more wholesome. Adelheid is a dear little girl, and I am really desperately in love with her. I assure you, I finally decided at the dance that I would marry her."

And so, in this scented and rose-coloured room, the fate of the two girls was decided. For Adelheid the sum of her aspirations and desires was assured her—the "irresistible Diedrich" had deigned to select her for himself. As for Patience—her ambition was to be realized. Her lover was young, strong, and gay, and would woo her with the laughter, passion and kisses which, as she had informed the horrified Mr. Penny, were indispensable to her conquest.

And for the other requirements—Helmuth Rabenstedt would certainly have considered the person who spent a pound on an old cup and saucer when he could get a new one for sixpence, worthy only of pity tinged with contempt.

CHAPTER VII

ADELHEID was a *Braut*, and the emotional glamour of her engagement seemed to shed its effulgence into every corner of the Lessingstrasse flat. She was treated with a tearfully tender respect—almost, Patience thought, as if she had been placed in a shrine. Frau Trenberg was every whit as excited as her daughter, and no subject unrelated to the tremendous event was thought or spoken of by either. Together they celebrated emotional orgies of the most delightfully-harrowing description, when the ever-ready water-works were allowed free play; and they painted a future filled with sanctified love and willing obedience—a hallowed union, mystic and wonderful. One moment they were plunged into the question of pillow-slips and tea-cloths, the next they were weeping in one another's arms, murmuring chaotic endearments.

The Major was benign and gracious; even his jokes were tinged with a hymeneal flavour, and he would frequently pinch his daughter's round cheek and caress her. "So my little girl is going to be a *Frau Baronin*? I shall have to grow more sedate and get a bald head and a corporation in order to look the part of a grandfather!"

"But, Papa!" Adelheid would murmur, looking down and blushing furiously; and then more embraces and tender exhortations from Mamma would follow.

Even the servants took part in this sentimental festival. Bertha was drawn into intimate conclave. "Berthachen, do you like these petticoats with the crochet? Berthachen, do you think we should get two flower-stands for the dear child's salon? Or do you think one will be enough besides the *étagère* Fräulein Adelheid painted herself with red roses?"

Amid all these flutterings and preparations, the "bridegroom" himself played his part in a manner entirely satisfactory to the chief persons concerned. His ancient name and his father's generous allowance delighted the Major, while Frau Trenberg was touched and gratified with his kiss and his "Na Mamma, we shall be great friends I am sure!" "The dear kind-hearted boy!" she murmured, mopping her eyes. "He already treats me like a son!"

As for his Adelheid—when he pressed his lips on hers and held her in a tight embrace, she blushed and trembled enough to satisfy even him. And when she placed her timid little hand bravely in his and looked up at him with trusting adoration shining in her wet eyes, even his suspicious, besmirched mind was struck with the innocence and devotion illuminating the round, childish, face. For one instant he felt a twinge of remorse, a half-stifled sense of shame. "I will try to be a good husband to you, *Liebchen*," he muttered rather hoarsely. And most of his friends and companions would have considered he had thereby made her handsome compensation for any of the natural vagaries of manhood in which he had previously indulged.

Then came all the ceremonies and rites indispensable to a German betrothal. The regimental band

played a serenade outside the house, friends and acquaintances streamed in to offer their congratulations and flowers, and, on Sunday morning, the engaged couple, seated in the best *Krümpewagen*, made the obligatory round of calls. Adelheid in her best blue velveteen dress, with a new white feather in her hat, sat proudly by the side of her Diedrich, who looked, she thought, beautiful beyond words in helmet and irrepachable uniform.

The engaged couple were, of course, rarely left alone. Frau Trenberg was torn between the *convenances* and the desire to provide her turtle-doves with ample opportunity for billing and cooing. So in the evenings the *Wohnzimmer* was left to them, while the rest of the party adjourned to the salon, where the Major frequently played suitable selections, ranging from wedding marches to waltzes. As the big folding doors between the two rooms were wide open, much privacy was not possible, but the "irresistible Diedrich" had never found an audience daunting in his life, and his love-making was so delightful and accomplished that it would almost have been waste for one person alone—and that one so inexperienced—to witness it.

On Patience this engagement, and the whole sentimentally upheaved atmosphere resulting, had a very definite effect. Adelheid, when she could force herself to think for a few minutes of matters outside the one momentous event, would slip her arm through her friend's, and whisper contritely: "I know I am very self-centred and selfish, *Herzchen*. Here am I full of my love and my betrothal, and every word must stab my poor *Herzchen*. Never mind, dearest, I *know* thou wilt be

asked in marriage soon—that thou too wilt be a *Braut!*”

And Patience would shake herself free from these encouraging protestations, conscious only of a new distaste and disquietude. She tried to picture herself in Adelheid's place. How she would detest those scented caresses, that calm assumption of rights, those Pasha-like airs and graces. But then Predow was a conceited, effeminate little creature, and as different from Rabenstedt as two human beings could possibly be. And yet—since Die-drich had become a member of the family circle, she had witnessed many little scenes which gave her material for disturbing thought. It seemed an entirely accepted fact that he should be waited upon both by his “bride” and by his future mother-in-law. They fussed over him and cosseted him, cooked and prepared delicacies to tempt him, while he sat complacently by, agreeably ready to reward Adelheid with caresses for doing her duty. And then his idea of “humour” Patience began to find most trying. One evening she came upon the engaged couple in the passage. Predow was standing in front of the looking-glass, brushing up his moustache with a minute ivory-backed brush, and preening himself like a peacock. Adelheid stood near him, the epitome of concentrated admiration. “You *are* handsome!” she whispered in almost awe-struck tones.

He transferred the brush to his carefully waved hair. “Yes, it reminds me of the *Leutnant* in the *Fliegende Blätter* who, when he looked at himself in the glass each morning, said: ‘Poor girls! I grow more beautiful every day!’”

"All the poor girls must have fallen in love with my Diedrich," Adelheid whispered laughing happily as he caught her in his arms.

Patience had shut the door hastily, only to run into Frau Trenberg's arms.

"My poor neglected *Herzchen*! How badly I have treated you, but you cannot imagine what a mother goes through in circumstances such as these! My silly old heart feels as if it would burst with anxiety and joy! The good God has indeed been kind to us. It is a happiness I had never dared hope for, to be able to make my darling a cosy little nest, a home of her own in the same town with ourselves. What a privilege to furnish and embellish it! With every pot and pan I put into her fresh little kitchen, I think of the dainties she will cook for her own table; every piece of furniture carries a prayer for her happiness and her welfare——"

The *Frau Major* wiped her eyes and blew her nose vigorously. "You are thinking what a silly old woman I am! But indeed *Herzchen* your turn is very near—my second daughter will soon be building a love-nest of her own!"

Patience escaped from this motherly embrace to the privacy of her room, her whole being in a state of chaotic denial. What had happened? Rabenstedt had not changed, and she surely was still in love with his strong, merry personality? It was sheer hysteria to be disturbed and upset because Adelheid happened to be engaged to a stupid little cub, eaten up with vanity and selfishness. She could not detect a single resemblance between him and Rabenstedt—they were the most striking an-

tithesis of one another—and yet, in certain of his actions and opinions, she caught herself morbidly endeavouring to trace a similarity, to catch a fleeting hint of identity with the man she loved.

She spent a night of tossing and questioning, of doubt and despondency. Then in the morning two letters were brought her. They both bore the Colne postmark; one was from her mother, the other was addressed in Miss Cordelia Duff's spidery handwriting. With a quickening of her pulse, she tore it open. She would read that one first: communications from Colne House always filled her with a superstitious dread and apprehension that her father had evolved some plan to thwart or upset her. She sat up in bed and unfolded her aunt's epistle. It ran:

MY DEAREST PATIENCE:—

As I have not heard from you for some time, I presume things are going well with you—people are usually quick enough to communicate when they want help or sympathy. Life is flowing on here in the same old rut. Needless to say I have not seen your august father, but your mother had tea with me about a fortnight ago, and I thought her looking very worried and tired. It appears your father has been wasting money again. He has bought a huge Italian cabinet and a whole altarpiece out of some Romish shrine, which cost a tremendous amount, and which your poor mother does not know where to put. The one excitement here has been the Bye Election. The Conservative candidate, Captain Cunningham Roper, is an exceedingly nice man. I met him at the Mannings, and

we had a good deal of talk together. In my youth I knew his father well; he was a distinguished soldier and statesman. Of course his son had no chance of getting in in this hopelessly Radical part of the world, but he did a lot of good work and reduced the majority considerably. I found him most agreeable and he came to tea with me several times. Apparently he had some thought of settling down at their place and working up the estate, but he afterwards gave up the idea. By the bye, I did not know you had ever met him. He asked after you and when you were coming back. I told him you appeared to be absolutely happy in Germany, and that I should not be surprised if you remained there. He sent me a post card from Port Said, so evidently he has gone off to the wilds again, and the spinsters of the neighbourhood will have another disappointment! The weather has been terribly bad, and the rainfall so incessant that my garden is almost washed away. The path between here and Colne House is under water and I have not ventured out for many days. Winter evenings are very long, but I have a good selection of books from Mudie's every week, so I manage to get through the time very well. Your Aunt Charlotte has gone to Canada and Australia, and I do not suppose will be back for a year. This letter is so long that you will think I am growing garrulous in my old days.

Write to me when you can spare time from the dissipations of your little garrison. You know I am always interested in your doings, and ready to help you whenever I can. With much love,

Your affectionate Aunt,

CORDELIA DUFF.

The sheet fell from Patience's fingers as she gazed straight before her. She saw again the rain-swept fields, but through a veil of dividing space and time. She saw the athletic, spare figure of a man in battered, perfectly-cut tweeds, his tanned face hardened by fighting and danger and softened by chivalrousness and sympathy—a man who, she instinctively felt, would dare everything except the happiness and welfare of those he loved. Suddenly the other figure, which till now had been the centre-piece of her imagination—the broad, boisterous young Teuton—seemed rather vulgar and jarring, noisy and oppressive. She tried to transplant the two, but she could as little imagine Rabenstedt's vast, uniformed bulk in a shooting suit and himself tramping over the Colne fields, as she could picture Cunningham Roper seated complacently in the hot *Wohnzimmer*, while the womenfolk of the establishment worked in the kitchen. And he had asked for her—he had intended settling down in England. Her eyes brightened—he *would* have settled down had she been there! But what was the use of it all now? He had heard she might not come back again, so he had returned to the wilds and probably he would stop out there indefinitely. Oh, she was miserable—distracted! It was her usual bad luck that she should have endured the dreary, hopeless uncongeniality of Colne for so many years, and now, just when happiness had actually penetrated to her there, she had slipped away into another world. Too late—everything comes too late. There was no happiness at Colne now, only sodden fields, dripping trees and long, desolate winter evenings. But he would come back soon—perhaps next year? More likely that he

would have forgotten her in a life of variety, danger, and work such as his. Yet such eyes must be constant and faithful; he would be loyal even to an idea——

She tore herself away from these reflections and opened the second letter. Her mother wrote:

DARLING PATIENCE:—

We have been wondering much at not hearing from you for some time, and sincerely hope you have not been ill. You must find the house and accommodation rather uncomfortable and ugly, and I am afraid the food is on an inadequate scale according to our ideas. In fact, your Father and I think you will probably be quite glad to return home sooner than we had arranged. You will have had ample opportunity for freshening up your German, and in any case, as the daughter is engaged, they may not want any longer to have an extra person in the house. Also we have had exceedingly heavy expenses, and though the sum we pay the Trenbergs is not large, still every little makes a difference and we really must retrench. The Ostade Father lent to the Bevan Exhibition has been returned with the frame damaged, so he has refused to lend the Turners as he had intended doing. The damp got into the morning-room and we have had to have it repapered. We have chosen a Morris design with a green ground, which harmonises with the chintz and the carpet and curtains and has not too pronounced a pattern to detract from the pictures. The Italian cabinet Father has just bought stands in the recess near the window and looks very handsome. The weather has been terrible—incessant rain and thick white mists. My

throat has been rather troublesome so I have not been out for weeks, but Johnstone says the garden is almost washed away. It is very disheartening as we spent so much upon it last autumn. Father sends his love and begs me to say he is looking forward to your help in sorting and cataloguing the Chinese ivories and enamels which he wants arranged on a different system——

Patience jumped out of bed, scattering her correspondence on the floor. "No, no, I will *not* go back!" she thought defiantly as she scrambled into her blue kimono and paced feverishly up and down the room. "To be let out of prison and then clapped back again just when one is beginning to know what freedom and happiness mean!"

She felt nervous, upheaved, frightened, as if Mr. Thaile's long fingers were poised over her, ready to descend at any moment, to seize her and deposit her back behind her prison walls. A wave of apprehension and melancholy seemed to emanate from the letter she had just read—a letter which she knew had been written at Mr. Thaile's dictation. She had always imagined herself an alien in those surroundings; now she felt she had drifted away to another continent, where the language of the mind and senses was as different as the language of the tongue; and she realized for the first time that it was actually this tremendous difference which had first attracted her. Irritated, exasperated and satiated with the exclusive cult of art, she had flown to a homely tastelessness, a happy vandalism, with a feeling of joyful relief. What did it matter that there was not a picture in the house her father would have saved from the scrap-heap? Or that

the salon was empty of taste and comfort and full of hideous encumbrances. When it was peopled with gay young creatures and echoing with laughter and music, it had seemed to her a hundred times more attractive than any room in Colne House.

Down the street the regimental band was playing. It was young Frau von Vorbach's birthday, and she was honoured with a serenade. The refrain of a waltz floated in at the open window—the waltz Patience had heard on that first Sunday evening:

“Love and Song, Kisses and Wine.”

With shining eyes and quickened breath, she leant on the sill and looked out at the scene beneath her. The band, ranged in a semi-circle across the street, was surrounded by quite a crowd; there was not one of the inhabitants of Stelnitz who did not love to hear the music.

Suddenly there was a clatter of hoofs, a jangle and commotion. Major Trenberg was returning from his early morning ride, followed by his soldier-servant and sitting his chestnut with easy elegance. There was, however, a third figure in the cavalcade upon which Patience's eyes were fixed. By the Major's side rode his adjutant, erect and imposing upon his big-boned mare, Betty. On so large a scale were both rider and steed, that they gave the impression of some warlike monument; as if the effigy of an equestrian warrior had suddenly come to life and pranced off his pedestal.

The warrior raised his eyes to her window, and though she ducked quickly to hide the tell-tale kimono, she caught a laughing, eager salute.

“No, I cannot, I *cannot* go back,” she whispered. “When he asks me I shall say ‘Yes.’”

CHAPTER VIII

THOUGH Patience had virtually taken the most important decision of her life, she was possessed with a feverish desire to postpone its actual fulfilment. She would temporize with her parents, temporize with Rabenstedt in order to obtain some respite—some further period of pleasant, irresponsible drifting, some extension of this gay existence devoid of duties and cares, in which she had revelled so delightedly. The idea of an entire upheaval, of a radical and permanent change in her conditions, frightened her. Why was she already forced to give up a life which suited her admirably, and hustled on to a momentous decision? She felt a bitter enmity for Mr. Thaile and an irritated resentment against Rabenstedt. These two men had her between them; and as she hated the former above everything, she must perforce cast in her fortunes with the other. Of course, she loved him; but she felt less convinced of this since the advent of Miss Duff's letter. For the first time she was thankful for the narrowness of German propriety. As she was English, and had no parents on the spot, Rabenstedt would naturally propose to her direct, and she was thankfully jubilant that so little opportunity was provided for such things. Even *he* could not make a declaration of love and a proposal of marriage in a crowded room, between inquisitive eyes and glasses of beer.

But at the big regimental ball, which was the next important social event in Stelnitz, she felt rather apprehensive. It was a far bigger and more gorgeous affair than the little dance she had enjoyed so much. The chief civilians of the town and their families were invited, and most of the regimental ladies brought friends and relations who came to Stelnitz for the occasion.

Such a galaxy of young girls the officers had rarely an opportunity to choose from. There were partners for all, and it was almost as difficult to steer and manœuvre as in an English ball-room. This was one of the rare occasions when low necks were not only allowed, but were considered *de rigueur*, and everyone was expected to appear in full war-paint. Patience was surprised at the striking absence of any good or valuable jewelry—handsome or antique necklaces and brooches were as lacking as diamond tiaras; most of the ladies were content with a little gold chain round their necks, and a flower in their hair. If, however, the women did not scintillate, the men shone and glittered sufficiently to make up for this. They wore full gala uniform, the higher officers with silver fringed epaulettes, and many Artillerymen mixed their black velvet collars with the scarlet collars of the Infantry.

Along the walls, rows of fat dowagers stretched round the room. The *Frau Regierungsrat* and the *Frau Geheimrat*, the *Frau Doktor* and the *Frau Pfarrer*, eagerly watching to see that the proper respect and precedence were given them; that they or their daughters were not neglected or passed over by the *Herren Offiziere*.

The Colonel, pompous and self-conscious, bestowed gracious attentions first upon one, then upon another. There was something so childishly consequential in his manner of offering his arm to the *Frau Gymnasialdirektor*, or of leading the *Frau Geheimrat* through the quadrilles, that he reminded Patience forcibly of some provincial mayor or alderman, who, in his robes of office, imagines himself the most important person in the universe. When not occupied in scattering favours among the fat wives of the town authorities, the Colonel kept an eagle eye upon the couples gyrating round the room.

"What do you mean by steering so badly?" he demanded angrily of poor little Leutnant von Seking, who previously had had the misfortune of cannoning into the doctor's ungainly daughter. "We shall have the whole town saying my officers cannot dance. I have never collided with anyone in my life, and I insist upon your taking greater care when you dance or not dancing at all!"

"*Zu Befehl, Herr Oberst!*" and the unfortunate young man retired crestfallen to the back of the room.

Retzingk was the next to evoke his wrath. "What do you mean by reversing? I beg you to understand that I will not have my officers reverse."

"*Herr Oberst*, I cannot reverse."

"Well, it is all the same. I wish you to understand I don't tolerate reversing."

Patience caught his cold, disapproving eye fixed upon her. Perhaps he apprehended that his magnitude did not inspire her with awe, or perhaps he

merely objected to her because she was English and because she was better dressed than he considered right. Certainly, she thought, his nervous, dowdy wife looked far more dignified and better-bred, despite the atrocious pink figured-silk which festooned her square body.

It was impossible for Rabenstedt to claim possession of Patience in the way he had done at the small entertainment, neither could he take such frequent turns with her during the waltzes. The Colonel saw that all his *Leutnants* did their duty by the civilian ladies, and they had laboriously to make the round of the collective pink, blue, and white frocks ranged along the walls. Patience found that a few rounds of a waltz were all a man might take, and this constant changing of partners detracted considerably from the pleasure of dancing.

The supper tables had been entirely rearranged by the Colonel, and, judging by the complaints, his chief object must have been to thwart the wishes of the younger portion of the community. The *Leutnants* who had expressed a special desire to conduct one particular young lady, found themselves paired with some indifferent or unsympathetic partner. Rabenstedt was not even at the same table with Patience, who had Leutnant von Marburg to take her in. She found him an earnest young man, always eager to describe scenery and his journeyings in tourist-ridden tracts. He had a very definite idea as to woman's proper place in the universe, and would have considered brain as dangerous a possession for her as gunpowder.

The mental and emotional conflicts through

which Patience had been fighting her way, had robbed her of the irresponsible joy, the freshness and buoyancy she had felt at the former dance. Everything seemed to have lost some of its former glamour; the rosy colouring had faded ever so little.

When, as the last item of the programme, the "Flower-waltz" began, her spirits revived somewhat. How gay the scene looked, she thought, as officers came in, their hands full of lovely flowers—splashes of reds, yellows, and violets against the glittering smart uniforms. The Colonel diligently made the round of the dowagers, first presenting a spray of roses to each of the more important civilians' wives, graduating down, until the lesser fry were honoured only with a couple of cyclamen, or an anemone.

The only persons who appeared left out in the cold were the civilian men present. None of the girls cared for them as cavaliers when such a glittering crowd of officers was there; and even the Colonel, despite his efforts to entertain and stand well with the non-military portion of the community, failed to provide them with the feminine attentions riveted upon the irresistible uniforms. Notwithstanding this, he felt convinced that by his tact and *savoir faire*, he had smoothed over the friction which previously had existed between the civilian and military society in Stelnitz.

"At last!" Rabenstedt exclaimed, fighting his way to Patience's side, and adding a huge carnation to her bunch of trophies. "I have had no chance to talk to you all evening, and there are some things I *must* say." He laid his arm round

her waist, and piloted her adroitly through the block.

"He can't be going to propose to me in this crowd," she thought anxiously as she felt his grasp tighten. She raised her eyes to his. "Well, one can't talk here," she said firmly, and as they neared the wall, she disengaged herself from his arm, and was immediately claimed by another partner, with more flowers to add to her collection.

Adelheid, as the blushing, envied little "bride," was the centre of attention, and Frau Trenberg had the joy of discussing her daughter's trousseau and entire household outfit with nearly every matron in the room.

"Those French enamelled pans are very expensive, but I always say the best is only good enough for my darling child."

"Yes, when my Lieschen married Leutnant von Schram of the Droberfeld Artillery stationed at Kretsch, I gave her the entire kitchen equipment in best blue and white enamel, and all the spice jars in blue and white china to match——"

The mammas were still exchanging confidences on the subject of their various daughters' outfits when, the ball over, they all trooped into the cloak-room.

Patience had averted her fate for that evening, but she knew it was only a very short respite, that soon the realities of life would claim her, and that this short, delightful chapter—the first taste of her youth—would be closed.

And indeed the elements appeared to favour Rabenstedt, for they combined to assist his suit. A hard, relentless frost set in, and after three days the

inhabitants of Stelnitz were hurrying eagerly to the ice with skates swinging in their hands. Many of them chose the artificial lake in the public gardens, for this was central and handy, but those who had time and energy to spare, preferred the long, empty stretches which the deep moat afforded. Here, under its steep, protecting banks, a windless quiet reigned—a quiet undisturbed by the rabble of children and townspeople who invaded the little lake. In fact, it had grown to be regarded as the exclusive preserve of the regiment, and more uniforms could be seen there than anything else.

Patience's spirits rose in the clear, frosty weather, and with the delightful advent of skating. She found that chaperonage relaxed its rigid laws on the ice, and she was allowed freedom to spend most of her days on the sheltered expanses of the old moat. Adelheid sometimes accompanied her, eager to see her affianced's celebrated grace on the ice, but as a rule, she and Frau Trenberg were too immersed in marriage preparations to find time for such things. More often the Major offered himself as Patience's cavalier, and she found he was as agile on his skates as he had proved himself in the ball-room.

"I am glad you have my husband to go with you," Frau Trenberg had said. "He does all these things so beautifully. If I came I should only fall down and break myself and the ice!"

One afternoon they arrived to find Rabenstedt waiting for them.

He was skating backwards and forwards, describing curves and cutting figures with a lightness and ease remarkable in such a massively heavy per-

son. His hands were plunged in the pockets of his grey military cloak, and the frost had made his face ruddier than usual, and had powdered his dark moustache. As they climbed down the bank, he was at their side, saluting and smiling gaily.

"Good day, Rabenstedt," the Major said. "So you have come to skate with Mees Saile."

The eyes of the girl and the man met, and Patience knew that the time had come, that evasion would not be possible any longer, and that this very afternoon she would have taken the final plunge, which must alter her entire existence. She sat down on a chair, while Rabenstedt kneeled before her fixing on her skates. Even his equably good-humoured face looked rather excited, she thought.

"I am glad you are here," the Major added, rising to his feet. "I can only stay a short time as I have to go on to the Casino, so you will be able to conduct Mees Saile home."

Patience felt the colour rising in her cheeks; everything was combining against her, the weather for freezing and thus creating one of the few opportunities for free intercourse, the Major for deserting her like this. She felt a sensation of impotence; it was no good fighting against the inevitable any longer—besides, as she had made up her mind to accept Rabenstedt, she might as well do so now as later. Her delightful, heedless holiday, her first taste of irresponsible youth were gone, any way.

The ice was singularly silent and empty. Most of the officers were at the Casino, where the Colonel had ordered them to attend—rumour had it, in order to administer rebuffs for delinquencies commit-

ted at the ball—and Frau Mendl had a “Coffee-party” which monopolized most of the ladies of the regiment. There were only a couple of *Einjäh-riger*, aimlessly drifting past, and little Ann Marie and Trudchen Stoll with their untidy “Mamsell,” who was vainly trying to keep them on their feet.

Patience, skating between the two men with hands crossed, was feverishly trying to think. She wanted for the last time to focus her mind on the whole question, to sort out her jumbled feelings before Fate had made this a futile operation. But try as she would, she could not think coherently; she kept on repeating to herself. “He is good-tempered, gay, and he loves me, and of course I really do care for him——” Then her mind wandered vaguely and fixed itself upon some ridiculous detail. Why was there a small circular patch in Rabenstedt’s white doe-skin glove? She wondered whether the shop put it in. What millions of gloves the officers must have—you never saw one in a dirty pair. How he squeezed her hand! Surely he was far less self-assured and talkative than usual? The Major was keeping up the conversation almost alone. And what would existence with him be like? He would not be dictatorial and selfish like Predow? And if she said No when he asked her, if she told him she did not want to marry now—she enjoyed life far too much as it was? But that would not be true. She *had* enjoyed the brief holiday given her, but if she refused him it would cease, and she would be summoned back to her prison. And suddenly the vision rose vividly before her eyes, of Colne House buried in sopping vegetation, of the winter winds howling round its lonely walls,

of the interminable dreary evenings in the society of the unappreciative and uncongenial people, of the hopeless despondency in the morning—another day to be killed—of the unused vitality and energy which refuses to be drugged with sleep. No—a thousand times no! She could never face that again, and involuntarily she returned the pressure of Rabenstedt's fingers.

"Now, *gnädiges Fräulein*, I must leave you to Herr Rabenstedt's care. He will conduct you home."

"But naturally, with the greatest pleasure," Rabenstedt replied, drawing his heels together.

"Well, *auf Wiedersehen*. You will not be able to stop much longer, it is already beginning to get dark." The Major shook hands, saluted and skated away in the direction of the chairs.

The short winter afternoon was indeed closing in quickly. The atmosphere was white and still with that peculiar woolly opaqueness which portends snow. A veil of silvery mist was floating over from the flatlands beyond the moat, and wrapping everything in a phantom shroud. Steep banks, trees, even the dark pencilled ice, looked shadowy and unreal. An awe-struck silence seemed to drop over everything; the children and soldiers had disappeared, and with the departure of the Major, Patience felt as if she had lost the last hold upon her old world.

A silence fell between them; neither attempted any ordinary conversation, but the girl felt the sharp, nervous tension that seemed more tangible than the scene around them. When, when would he speak? The silence seemed rackingly inter-

minable, and yet she dreaded with a morbid apprehension the moment when it would be broken. She shut her eyes, and now they had stopped as if by common consent and he was speaking.

"You know what I am going to say," he began, still holding both her hands in his. "You know that from the first moment I saw you, my fate was decided and I felt I must, I *would* marry you. You have no idea, my sweet little angel, what an influence you have had over me. I did not dream one woman could possess my whole heart, imagination and thoughts as you have done! I assure you that during my work, during all my occupations, I have been dominated by your sweet image, by the one longing and desire to have you for my own."

The words poured forth with an unwavering glibness—an unhesitating proficiency which almost appalled Patience. They seemed to sweep over her in a hot, relentless wave, and all she could do was to wait with a queer mixture of dread and excitement until she was engulfed. The moment before she would have fled from the oncoming tide; now she experienced something like a reckless exhilaration.

"You darling, can you have any idea how I adore you?" He was using now the familiar "thou," which gives such an intimate colour to conversation. "You are the sweetest, most fascinating girl I ever dreamt existed. You have captured my whole heart and being."

He drew her closer and closer to him, and she acquiesced unresistingly. Now his face was so close to hers that she could feel his breath, warm in the freezing air, could smell the faint odour of

brilliantine, scented shaving-soap and cigarette smoke.

"You love me too—you will be my little wife?"

She felt as if the answer had been squeezed out of her, as if she had been seized in great strong arms, enveloped, overwhelmed, before her lips had framed the reply. And in the midst of this fiery, breathless, almost rough embrace, she thought defiantly. "How sure he is of me! He never dreamt I might refuse."

"My darling! My dearest one! My sweet adorable little wife!" And he was raining hot, stifling kisses upon her, and murmuring German words of endearment. "Little leaf of my heart! Sweet little mouse!"

How terribly strong he was—she felt almost as if her bones were being crunched—how large his face looked, bending over hers in the darkness—she had never before noticed what a big cleft there was in his massive, square chin. She struggled faintly, suffocated and breathless from his passionate outburst.

He would not, however, release her from his arms. "I could kiss those beautiful blue eyes out of their sockets—those eyes that will always shine for love of me—and that sweet, defiant, little mouth, which I shall teach the art of kissing back. Sweet one, dearest heart's darling, why do you say nothing?"

"How can I?" she gasped. "You are nearly suffocating me. My hat is almost off, and I have lost my furs."

Then he released her, and she stepped quickly away, adjusting her hat and disordered hair, dab-

bing her flushed face and feeling thankful that it was dark.

"I can't find my muff," she murmured feebly, conscious of the anticlimax.

He picked it up and handed it to her, retaining her hand as he did so. "My little bride, my little wife," he said tenderly, bending over her. "Do you see the tears in my eyes? They are tears of joy that you are mine, that soon I shall possess you always and for ever and evermore."

His voice was choked with genuine emotion, but she suddenly felt an odd, sinking sensation—an intuitive realization of the finality of this one relationship to which she had just pledged herself. Bound to this one man for ever, evermore—"till death us do part."

It was now quite dark, and the white mist eddied round them like shreds of an icy shroud from some frozen sepulchre. Gusts of biting wind cut their faces, and a dog tied up in some outhouse, howled dismally. Patience shivered. Her feet were perished from standing in the freezing cold, her face burning from the kisses rained down upon it. She felt a superstitious dread—a terror half physical, half mental.

"My poor darling is cold," Rabenstedt exclaimed. "Let me take off her skates and we will go home at once and tell the joyful news to everybody."

But she laid a detaining hand on his arm. "No, no," she said quickly. "Please do not say anything to anyone until I have written to my parents."

"All right," he interrupted gaily. "My sweet one need not be so worried. Papa and Mamma

shall be told first. But one thing my darling must do, or I shall be very angry——” he stooped down and held Patience’s face between his hands—“she must call me ‘*Du*.’ She must remember that I am now her ‘bridegroom.’”

“Before we go home, there are several things I must tell you—thee, I mean,” she corrected hastily.

He was on his knees before her, undoing her skates, and he looked up laughing merrily. “How serious my little singing-bird is! Why, we have the whole of our lives to tell one another things in.”

“But these are things I must tell you now,” she insisted, trying to hide the irritation in her voice.

“Very well, talk away. I love to see the words bubbling adorably out of thy eloquent little mouth!”

They had climbed the steep bank, and were walking along in the darkness. He tucked her arm under his, and pressed her to his side. Under a solitary gas lamp he stopped and kissed her full in the middle of her lips.

She drew back hastily. “Don’t,” she cried. “Some one may see us.”

“And if they do!” he retorted, laughing delightedly. “They will see a very charming sight!”

“But I told you nobody must know yet that we are engaged!” she exclaimed desperately. “I must tell my parents first, and of course they will never give their consent.”

At last she had roused him. He drew up abruptly and looked at her with an almost blank expression.

“Why? Why should they refuse their consent?”

She shrugged her shoulders, overwhelmed with the impossibility of ever making this man comprehend the conditions of her home, the nature of her parents. She might talk all night, and he would never grasp the most fleeting notion of Colne House, of the life there, of the temperament, the taste and prejudices of its master. She might as well talk Chinese to him as attempt an explanation of all his items of ineligibility in Mr. Thaile's eyes. From Rabenstedt's point of view, Mr. Thaile must appear an incomprehensible, demented, and negligible cumberer of the earth. In the eyes of the man, bred and brought up in the midst of militarism, this dilettante professor, this dabbler in antiquities, this frenzied collector of dusty old odds and ends, this *savant* who possessed no official or governmental post, must himself appear the height of undesirability. Surely he would be thankful and honoured to acquire a German officer for a son-in-law? Surely he would give his English sovereigns with both hands in order to facilitate the marriage?

Patience had seen enough of the ideas and views of the particular class of German among whom she had lived, to apprehend this. She felt tired and overstrung, irritated at the baffling difficulty of making Rabenstedt understand the state of things, anxious to cut short the explanations.

"I know for a positive fact that my father will never give his consent to the marriage. He does not want me to marry at all, and if he did, he would oppose tooth and nail my becoming the wife of a German."

Rabenstedt was sobered now; he looked more gloomy and put out than Patience had ever seen

him before, and strode along with his hands in his pockets and no attempted endearments.

"But it seems absurd," he exclaimed at last. "If I were a merchant or a business man I could understand, or a doctor or a professor, but an officer—an officer in the German Army! I cannot believe that under these circumstances he could possibly raise any objections."

Patience sighed despairingly. "I assure you, my father would be no more impressed with the fact that you are an officer than if you were a professor—in fact, rather less, because he would have some points in common with the professor, and soldiers he considers useless, empty-headed idlers."

"Heavens! What is to be done then?" Rabenstedt demanded, his amorous joviality gone, and a look on his face which was new to Patience. "This is a fine thunderbolt to let down upon our heads. You say—and as you say it I am forced to credit the extraordinary fact—that your father would never give his consent to our marriage, and yet, how on earth are we to marry without it? Or are you perhaps quite independent of your parents?"

A hint of hope shone in his voice, but she shook her head with a sense of painful disillusionment. So the question of money was already worrying him. She could still feel his kisses on her lips, and he was beginning to look gloomy and disturbed about the question of her dowry. Of course she knew, it is nearly always impossible for German girls to marry without one, and all parents, however poor, manage to scrape a certain sum together; but, after all, Rabenstedt need not have been put out at the first mention of difficulties.

What was the use of his good-humour if it forsook him on such occasions?

"You know I made no mystery about my position," he continued, biting his moustache. "I have told you that I have no parents, and that I only possess a very small yearly allowance on which I can just manage alone."

She tried to fight against the feeling of uneasy discomfiture which was assailing her. "Well, I was going to tell you, even if my father refuses his consent, I count upon getting my aunt to help us. I know she is leaving me something in her will, and she has always said if I needed help I was to come to her."

As if by magic, the gloom and annoyance disappeared from Rabenstedt's face, giving place to its habitual air of easy-going gaiety.

"Hurrah!" he cried, seizing Patience's hands again. "Three cheers for the *Erbtante!* You must write at once to the dear old lady and tell her what a virtuous, affectionate good fellow her nephew-to-be is. If you like I will write her a sweet little note myself, assuring her of my undying devotion and appreciation of all her future goodness and generosity to us."

They were passing through a narrow and deserted street. Rabenstedt dragged Patience impetuously along, snatching occasional kisses from her, and humming the refrain of a music-hall song:

"Papa's gold I see,
And I hope it's for me;
But better far
Than a rich Papa
Is a rich and ancient Aunt!"

"Why is my little singing-bird not joining in the chorus?"—he laughed boisterously—

"But better far
Than a rich Papa
Is a rich and ancient Aunt!"

He seemed to consider it a tremendous joke; he was the same light-hearted, good-humoured fellow she had always found him, and she almost felt as if the passing fit of annoyance had been a figment of her imagination.

As they neared the Lessingstrasse, he drew her nearer to him. "What fun it would be to surprise them!" he whispered. "They will all be in the *Wohnzimmer*—I can see the light burning—and it would be grand if we just burst in upon them arm-in-arm, made deep bows and said: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we beg to state that we are engaged, and we are the most blissful couple in the universe!'"

But she shook her head hurriedly. "No, no, I want to slip in quietly and go straight to my room. I will only tell Frau Trenberg. She is so kind and motherly."

"Why not tell them all? You surely are not ashamed of your engagement to me?"

"Of course not," she said wearily, "only can't you understand that I have gone through a good deal and am awfully tired? Besides, I have difficult letters which I must write now, one to my parents——"

"And one to the 'rich and ancient Aunt,'" he interrupted gaily. "Mind you make that one very,

very nice, and don't forget to emphasise what a model of virtue I am!"

He pushed open the heavy door of the entrance leading to the house and courtyard. It was dimly lit by a single gas lamp and was quiet and deserted.

"Good-night, my sweet one!" he said, taking her in his arms. "It is hateful leaving you, but think of all the years and years of our future lives, when there will be no good-bye for us, when, instead of leaving you on the door-step, we shall have a love-nest of our own, where we shall be close, close together."

He was kissing her rapidly, roughly, wherever his lips happened upon. She felt as if he were some ravenous animal devouring her. "Your skin is like satin," he muttered. "You are altogether delectable—if only we were married——"

She tore herself away. "I must go in now," she said, looking down at him from the vantage point of a small flight of steps, "Good-night."

He stood below her, terribly, overpoweringly big. To her fevered and agitated imagination, he seemed to block out the rest of the universe, to have taken an oppressively violent possession of her. And this was only the beginning——

As she turned to go, he sprang up the steps, and seized a laughing, hasty kiss. "Sleep well, little leaf of my heart!" and he was gone.

She heard the heavy door bang, then the clatter of his footsteps, and the metallic ring of his spurs; she could detect the clang of his sword on the pavement as he strode down the street. He was whistling the refrain of that detestable music-hall song,

which irritated and offended her. Yet as she mounted the stairs to the first floor, the stupid words beat again and again on her ears:

“But better far
Than a rich Papa
Is a rich and ancient Aunt!”

Was she making a fatal mistake? Yet surely this was what she had wanted, what she had demanded of life? The passion, gaiety, and laughter were there, but something was lacking that she wanted, and something was present which she dreaded; and neither of these things could she do more than vaguely apprehend.

“Well, I suppose I demand too much,” she thought wearily. “Perhaps we don’t understand one another yet. Adelheid declares that no girl knows anything about her *fiancé* until after she has married him.”

She was too tired out, physically and mentally, to be able to sort her ideas, and the letters she had to write weighed with an anxious oppression upon her mind. What an avalanche of opposition and unpleasantness they would dislodge upon her! Her heart sank at the thought of all the arguments she would have to refute, the questions which must be answered, the objections she must meet and vanquish.

This evening she felt she must have quietly to herself; she could not face coy interrogations, jubilant and sentimental congratulations. So, on the plea of a headache, she retired early to her room, and there, safe from interruption, she gave way

to all her doubts, fears and apprehensions, and, plunged in the depths of a tremendous reaction, fell to wondering whether she loved this man at all. He had seemed so much nicer before they were engaged. She had liked him far better before the barriers were pulled down; now she noticed a childishness, a roughness, and uncontrolledness about him which had previously not been apparent. And if this continued? Supposing the more intimate their relations became, the less she cared for him?

Assuredly the night of her engagement was the most unhappy one she had spent since her arrival at Stelnitz.

CHAPTER IX

THE next morning Patience confided her news to Frau Trenberg, and that lady's joy and delight over it revived the girl's own drooping spirits.

"My *Herzchen*, I can never tell you how happy this makes me!" the *Frau Major* cried, embracing her again and again. "To think that we shall have you here for ever as one of ourselves, and that you have been chosen by about the best, most respectable, and amiable young officer in the Regiment. He has the highest character—I have never even heard Frau Mendl say a word against him."

When Patience explained the difficulties which lay ahead, the insurmountable objections, the complete refusal she would meet with at her father's hands, Frau Trenberg was almost as much surprised as Rabenstedt had been.

"But why should he not give his consent? Your *Bräutigam* is not only your social equal, but he is an officer, and a man of high character, and respectable habits."

"Ah, but he is poor, and then he is German. The first thing alone would put him absolutely out of court with my father; the second is merely an aggravation."

"But it is no sin to be poor!" Frau Trenberg exclaimed.

"Many people I know regard it as the greatest sin there is, especially for prospective sons-in-law."

"Surely not! It is only if parents are very poor themselves, or if they belong to the business classes, who only count by money, that they consider money of the most importance."

"It may be so here, but that is certainly not the case with us. I am perfectly sure my father will definitely refuse his consent."

"But how can he if he has no valid reasons for doing so?" Frau Trenberg argued. "I will write to him myself, and tell him what a high character your intended bears, and that there is absolutely nothing against him."

"He might have everything else against him if only he were rich," Patience said bitterly. "My father will pretend that he is refusing his consent for some other reason, but it will really be because the man I have chosen is poor."

"But with your dowry you will be able to manage quite comfortably," Frau Trenberg interposed. "Rabenstedt has always been used to economy, and life here is very simple."

"My dowry!" Patience ejaculated. "Though my father spends hundreds of pounds upon his house and his hobbies, I don't suppose he has for one instant contemplated giving me a dowry. He would probably grumble if he had to provide me with a personal trousseau."

"Surely that is not possible, *Herzchen!* It is his duty to provide for his child. Besides, supposing he were not actually compelled to do so, he would be so despised by the world if he gave her nothing."

"Perhaps that may be the case here, but it seems in England parents get off more easily. They ex-

pect their daughters to find husbands who will take them off their hands without a penny."

"Dear, dear, can that be so!" Frau Trenberg cried incredulously. "With us it is the greatest stigma upon parents if their daughters have no dowry. But perhaps my *Herzchen* is looking at things in a black light. I will write to the *Herr Papa*, and tell him of Rabenstedt's steadiness and good character, that he does not drink or gamble, and has no—no other obligations. Why, I do not believe the good fellow has more than a few small debts; and I should like to know of how many of the young officers could this be said! No, it would be a very different affair if we had to ask the *Herr Papa* to settle up a large pile of debts—but, as it is, he can never refuse his consent, so do not lose courage, my little *Herzchen*!"

Frau Trenberg, her ample form arrayed in the habitual morning *déshabille*, consisting of a loose, grey-coloured flannel jacket, enveloped Patience in a large embrace.

Despite her perturbation and anxiety, the girl could not help laughing at the idea of Mr. Thaile meekly paying his son-in-law's debts; then her eyes clouded as she realized afresh the hopelessness of ever establishing any understanding between Stelnitz and Colne House—there existed an unbridgeable gulf, which, she felt, would eventually yawn into a shoreless sea of alienation.

Still, there was her Aunt Cordelia, that large-minded, rather perverse old lady, to whom she always turned in her troubles, and to whom she was also attached by the added bond of a mutual dislike—their common enmity to Mr. Thaile. Pa-

tience instinctively felt that the certain and violent opposition of her father would be one of the most powerful reasons for ranging Miss Duff upon her side; and she gave ample weight to this point in writing to her aunt.

At last the two difficult and dreaded letters were accomplished, and Frau Trenberg had composed an enclosure for each, praising Rabenstedt's worth, character, and reputation, expressing her and her husband's high opinion of him, and even adding that they had contemplated him previously as a possible husband for their own dearly beloved daughter. At Patience's instigation, she had in her letter to Miss Duff added the following paragraph, expressed, of course, in her own manner:

"Your dear niece, who has won all our hearts, has very often spoken of her treasured Aunt with the deepest admiration and affection. The poor child feels convinced that her Father will put every obstacle in the way of her happiness, and would be completely cast down and miserable if she was not sure of your support and understanding. She knows you will not be influenced by Mr. Thaile's prejudices and objections, and she centres all her hopes upon you with the knowledge that you have always helped her in all her troubles."

After the dispatch of these missives, Patience waited in a condition of apprehensive defiance. Whenever the postman's knock sounded upon the door, she was filled with dread that it heralded the advent of the Colne House mandate, and when the alarm proved false, a weary disappointment succeeded, that this nervous tension should still continue.

Of course the whole establishment was now acquainted with the state of her affairs, and Patience found the avalanche of playful or sentimental congratulations which descended upon her, a sore trial for her overstrung nerves. Rabenstedt she evaded as much as possible, upon the plea that until she had heard from her parents it would be better to keep apart. Every morning, however, his soldier-servant delivered a little bunch of flowers for her, accompanied by a note full of impassioned endearments, written upon coloured note-paper.

"The dear fellow!" Frau Trenberg would exclaim with tears in her eyes. "I am sure he has had to go without something in order to buy these flowers."

This thought made Patience thoroughly uncomfortable. As to the amorous mauve-tinted notes—half of them remained undeciphered, as she never could master German characters, and was by no means disposed to give these fiery ebullitions either to Frau Trenberg or to Adelheid to read. Besides these tokens, Rabenstedt employed all his spare time in promenading the Lessingstrasse, and if he might not mount the steps to his lady-love, he could at least gain some satisfaction by gazing up at the windows, and hoping that perhaps one particular pair of eyes was watching him from behind the heavily festooned lace curtains.

This touching exhibition of devotion did not fail in its effect upon Patience. She had had time to recover from the reaction experienced on that first evening of her engagement; and viewing both Rabenstedt and events from a distance, she determined that any doubts and distaste were caused

only by a natural maidenly recoil from such passionate wooing. Her Helmuth had regained much of his former lustre. As she watched his imposing, uniformed figure, parading the street—up and down in the cold, only for the joy of looking up at her windows—she reflected that he was a lover of whom she need not feel ashamed, and one who did not mind showing his devotion in an ingenuously open manner. The whole Trenberg family united in singing his praises; every day they had some fresh story of his worth, his amiability, his popularity—all the soldiers adored him: “Our Leutnant Rabenstedt,” as he was endearingly called. And as we instinctively value more highly the affection of those who stand well in popular esteem, so Patience’s feelings towards her *fiancé* gradually warmed and revived in this fire of eulogistic comment.

It needed, however, one thing to fan them into hot flame, and this was not long in coming. When Patience at last held the dreaded letter from Colne House in her hand, she saw, with a quickening of her pulses, that the address was written in Mr. Thaile’s pedantic characters. As she knew that he never by any chance wrote letters unless he had something particularly unpleasant to communicate, she apprehended the worst; but she could hardly restrain an exclamation as her eyes flew over the following:

MY DEAR PATIENCE,

Your communication has shocked and upset your Mother and myself more than I can possibly express. That you—our daughter—should have

forgotten yourself so far as to become entangled with a poverty-stricken German soldier, is indeed a bitter pill. It is hardly credible that, with all the advantages you have enjoyed, you should be so foolish and gullible as to accept the attentions of a penniless German nobody, who obviously offers them because he hopes there is money behind you. When he hears that your father will not give you one farthing, and that you are helpless and penniless without his aid, he will doubtless discover that he has a pressing engagement elsewhere. The whole affair is sordid and discreditable in the extreme, and the only excuse I can offer for your conduct is that you are temporarily not in your right mind. I must beg of you to make your preparations to leave Stelnitz and return home as soon as possible. Herr and Frau Trenberg have certainly shown that they are not worthy of the confidence your Mother and I reposed in them. Your behaviour has quite prostrated your poor Mother, and I myself have been so upset that I had to give up attending a sale at Sotheby's.

Kindly send me a card at once saying whether you will arrive on Friday or Saturday, and I will meet you at Charing Cross, though I thereby lose a whole day.

Your affectionate father

FROBISHER THAILE.

Patience's cheeks were flaming, and her hand shaking by the time she had finished this production. All the old rebellion, the bitter resentment, the superstitious apprehension, flared up again, and, with one of her abrupt emotional revulsions,

she felt that Rabenstedt was a maliciously maligned hero, the one man in the world she could and would marry. If the Trenbergs' praises had reinstated him in her eyes, Mr. Thaile's abuse raised him on to a pinnacle far higher than anything else could have done. For every insult her father launched, she felt a wave of love and contrition go out to the man who inspired this virulence. With a passionate defiance she swore that no sacrifice would be too big to offer up upon the altar of her outraged and ill-treated love; and if before she had known hours of hesitation and doubt, this letter put a seal upon her engagement, more final and binding than any given word or token.

Perhaps, in the circumstances, she had hardly expected to hear from her mother—she knew with what relentless cruelty Mr. Thaile would demand her absolute acquiescence—but still the girl felt a pang of lonely disappointment that there was no smuggled word of love and sympathy to soften the brutality of this communication.

But worse still, there was no sign of life from Miss Duff, and Patience spent an agonizingly long day, when she allowed her imagination free reign to picture the most varied and wild difficulties and contingencies. Her aunt had often expressed her admiration for independence, and had let fall several remarks from which she inferred that, should her matrimonial wishes not coincide with those of Mr. Thaile, Miss Duff might be relied upon to help. But supposing this only referred to a possible English husband—supposing her aunt considered it wrong to marry out of one's nation,—supposing she disliked Germans—some might have

been rude to her when she was travelling—Patience's head was aching with all the incoherent conjectures rushing through it. With Mr. Thaile's letter, and her re-awakened feelings for Rabenstedt, all her old confidence had deserted her, and the more she dreaded and apprehended insurmountable difficulties in the future, the more convinced she grew that her whole happiness and life would be blighted if she could not marry this one man.

That evening, when the postman's knock sounded, she held herself back from rushing to the door, and sat in her room, repeating automatically, "There is nothing for me. I am sure I shan't hear anything to-night." The restraint had been so great, that when Schmidt appeared, and, standing stiffly with heels together, announced a letter for *gnädiges Fräulein*, she almost snatched it from him.

At last relief, assistance, support! She read:—

MY DEAREST PATIENCE,

I know you must have been anxiously waiting to hear from me, and I am most sorry to have delayed writing, but I wished, before doing so, to hear what line was being taken by your parents. To-day I learn from your mother that Mr. Thaile is in the most uncontrolled condition of rage over your news, and has ordered you instantly home. My poor Patience, I am afraid there are troublous times ahead for you, and I would ask you very seriously, before we go farther, are your love and confidence strong enough to carry you through? If this is not merely an infatuation, a passing whim, but a real, solid, serious thing, you may rely upon your old aunt to help you as much

as she can. Frau Trenberg, who I am sure must be a most estimable, upright woman, speaks in the highest terms of the man you have chosen, whose sole drawback, I gather, is that he is poor. Though I am aware that this is the greatest crime in your father's eyes, I do not in this, as on most other subjects, share his opinion. It is my personal experience that the nicest men are usually poor, and if, after convincing myself of the real nature of your affection, and of the desirability of your Herr Rabenstedt, you still wish to marry in defiance of your father, I will stand by you, and give you all the assistance you need. As I cannot travel out to Germany at present, I am writing fully to Frau Trenberg on the subject. You know my theory that every human being should have the right to shape his or her own existence, but have you thought what giving up your own nationality means? You must realize that in taking this step you renounce it, your associations and traditions, and must adopt heart and soul your husband's country. If you are ready to do this, and your love is sufficient to carry you over all these obstacles, then you shall have my blessing, and some more substantial assistance——"

Patience sprang to her feet, and rushed impetuously out of the room. The Major was seated at the big round table in the *Wohnzimmer* studying the Army List—one of the few books he ever read—while Frau Trenberg was putting the finishing touches to the *Abendessen*, hindered rather than assisted by Adelheid and Predow, who was spending the evening at the Lessingstrasse.

"I have heard from my aunt! She is going to

help us!" Patience cried excitedly, waving the letter aloft. The reaction, after the doubts and despondency of the day, made her feel hysterically hilarious. At once she was surrounded, embraced, congratulated. The Major rushed to the piano and rattled off a triumphant wedding march.

"Wife," he shouted over his shoulder. "We must have a bottle of champagne to celebrate the occasion!"

"Yes, and Helmuth must be here too," Frau Trenberg cried. "I am sure Diedrich will not mind fetching him—Schmidt could not explain."

The amiable Herr von Predow declared himself quite willing, and his virtue was rewarded by a double quantity of grateful and admiring kisses from his fond little "bride."

"How kind he is!" she murmured to Patience. "He is always ready to do things for others. But so I am sure would your Helmuth be," she added, anxious to include him in her eulogy.

Frau Trenberg was bustling about, putting out the champagne glasses, and adding various little delicacies in honour of the occasion.

"Of course it is most terrible that you should have this difference with your parents," she said to Patience, who was assisting her. "I have never known such a thing occur before, but I feel sure your aunt will bring them round, and all will be arranged happily."

Patience did not contradict. Any idea of discord or dissension pained the *Frau Major* so deeply that the thought of an unreconciled Mr. Thaile would have effectually spoilt her evening. For herself the girl felt an almost defiant delight that

at last she could show her mettle—at last shake off the fetters of a dependence which had eaten into her most sensitive feelings.

There was the sound of voices, and loud laughter in the passage. Predow had returned with a radiant Rabenstedt, a giant glowing with health and strength, who looked as if he had just come from a banquet, instead of from a frugal meal cooked by his own hands.

"My darling!" he exclaimed in his stentorian voice; and there, before everybody, including the grinning Schmidt, he took Patience in his arms, and kissed her again and again.

The moment before she had felt a remorseful tenderness for him, an anxiety to show her affection; now this unabashed exhibition before an interested audience cooled her instantly, and she drew herself quickly away from his embrace. He, however, was in no way crestfallen at this reticence, which he regarded merely as a becoming coyness, the timid recoil of the unspoilt maiden, who trembles at the first contact with love and passion. This was as it should be: his "bride" was spirited without being brazen, self-possessed, except in the ecstatic delight of his embrace, when even her cool English independence disappeared.

"My little darling! My little mouse!" he said, following her into the sitting-room, where she had retreated from the desperately interested eyes of Schmidt. They were alone for the moment, and when he took her into his arms again, she not only offered no resistance, but, at his eager demand, gave him a faint and tentative kiss.

"That is right!" he exclaimed delightedly.

"Quite good for a beginning, my little *Schnuck-erchen!* Wait until I have given those adorable lips some lessons! I pity the man whose bride knows how to kiss before he has taught her!"

He was laughing into her eyes, and something of his joyful animal vitality seemed to pass to her. After all, it was foolish to be alienated and irritated at his unreserved methods of love-making. It was the custom of his country, and she had no more right to take offence at it than at his German name and expressions. After the cold indifference of her life at home, she could warm herself in the fiery passion her lover poured over her.

"And to think I shall soon, very soon have my little hearts-darling quite for my own," he continued, drawing Patience on to his knee. "The rich and ancient aunt is a famous creature! I am sure she and I shall get on splendidly together!"

"There will be all sorts of difficulties," Patience sighed. "She is going to inquire into everything first, and there will be no end of questions and things to answer."

"But what does it matter as long as she is going to help us?" Rabenstedt answered lightly. "Heavens! What a tiny little waist—I can almost get one hand round it! Wait till we have been married a short time, my angel—there will be a good deal more flesh on those dear little bones!"

"You don't want me to grow fat!" Patience cried in alarm. "I should simply hate to have a figure like—like some of the ladies here!"

"Do not agitate thyself, sweet one!" Rabenstedt laughed. "Whatever thy figure is, it will be adorable."

"You know my father will never give in. I shall have to break definitely with my parents," she said slowly.

"Well, if he is mad enough to refuse his consent to our marriage, thou art well quit of him," Rabenstedt replied with a slight shrug. "The *Erbtante* is helping us, so there is no need to worry. This soft blue stuff is just the colour of thy beautiful eyes, darling, but it is much too grand to wear when one is only the family party at home."

"Don't you like me to wear pretty things?"

"Yes, of course, when we go out; but when one is at home one does not waste one's finery—one makes oneself comfortable."

She looked at him in surprise, but there was no time for more conversation. A loud clatter tactfully announced Frau Trenberg's advent, and everybody was summoned to supper. They sat down the same party as upon that eventful Sunday evening, but how much had happened since then! The lives of all of them were changed, soon to branch off into different and alien channels.

This thought had occurred to the *Frau Major*, for after the cold duck and Italian salad had been attacked, she looked round with moist eyes.

"My dear children," she said solemnly, "my heart is filled with thankfulness when I think of the great joy that has come to us. On that Sunday evening when we all were together for the first time, I looked round the table, and prayed to the dear God for that which has actually happened. It seems almost too good to be true. I feel as if it must be a dream—— Why, we have even the same table-centre with the pink rose-buds, and—

what a strange coincidence!—we had sweet cucumbers on that evening as well!”

“The Mamma is making a speech!” the Major said with jovial tolerance, as he deftly uncorked the champagne bottle, and poured out the foaming, sweet wine.

“*Prosit! Prosit!*” There was a clinking of glasses, and a general embracing. Patience saw everything vaguely through a hot atmosphere of emotional festivity. The Major even kissed his wife, and vouchsafed some jocular endearments, which made the poor woman happy for several weeks.

In the salon afterwards, everybody clustered round the piano at which Rabenstedt was seated, while Frau Trenberg brought in glasses of beer for the assembly.

Helmuth raised his. “To the health of my new and dearly-beloved aunt!” he cried, and broke into the music-hall song, all the others joining lustily in the chorus:

“Papa’s gold I see
Is not for me,
But better far
Than a rich Papa
Is a rich and ancient Aunt!”

Rabenstedt was dashing over the keys, the Major was beating a loud accompaniment on the table, Adelheid and Predow were kissing surreptitiously behind the piano, and Frau Trenberg was laughing and weeping into her beer glass. Patience, dazed with this incessant repetition, could

not help wondering what Miss Duff herself would have said to such a scene.

Later on they turned up the square of carpet with its pattern of worn brown roses, the Major launched into a waltz, and the four young people danced.

"To my dying day I shall not forget the first time I held you in my arms at the Casino dance," Rabenstedt whispered. "I felt as if I could never, never let you go."

They were swimming round the room. Patience shut her eyes, intoxicated as she always was by the joy of perfect motion, and she felt an echo of the emotional rapture she had experienced on that previous occasion. Yes, she loved this man without any possible question. And how deeply he must love her—he could talk of nothing else.

When at last they sank, crimson and exhausted upon the stamped-velvet sofa, he could only pant, and pass his handkerchief over his moist face, and inside his high scarlet collar.

"Helmuth," she said, using his Christian name for the first time, "there are some things I must talk to you about. I want to know what I should reply to my father and to Aunt Cordelia?"

"What is the good of worrying about that this evening?" he said, reaching out his arm for a glass of beer. "You can write a loving diplomatic letter to the aunt to-morrow, and the *Frau Major* will help you. Hullo, Diedrichchen, what do you say to dancing a *Patineur*?"

He was on his feet again, Patience's arm held firmly in his. "I must teach you this step, darling."

"But it is most important that we should discuss several matters, so that I know which line to take," she pleaded anxiously.

"Do not let my little heartsleaf worry her sweet little head. The old aunt has promised to help, so *basta!* Everything will be all right. The other foot first—one, two, three!"

She shook her head despairingly. Evidently in his present mood it was quite impossible to make him talk seriously. She knew, however, one subject on which she could arouse his interest.

"Frau Trenberg is going to give me cooking lessons," she observed with rather a malicious twinkle in her eye.

"Ah, yes, I wanted to talk to you about that," he replied. "A woman who cannot cook is only half a woman, and is thought poorly of by her own sex and the other. I could not bear for my little mouse to be looked down upon, so she must learn diligently, and help the *Frau Major*. Do not be afraid, dearest, I will not scold terribly if the potatoes are burnt the first time!"

He laughed boisterously, but somehow she could not join in his merriment. Even now there was some portion of her in opposition, some feelings which were constantly jarred and irritated.

Afterwards, when they sat round the table in the *Wohnzimmer*, with their beer glasses, the men smoking cigars, Frau Trenberg turned to Rabenstedt.

"When is your engagement to be made public?" she asked. "Of course you will have to get the *Konsensc.*"

"I should like to blazon it from the house-tops

to-night," he exclaimed, "and send round the band to serenade *Herzchen* to-morrow morning."

But Patience started up. "No, no," she expostulated, "I want it kept quite quiet for the present. We have no right to publish it until we have settled definitely with my aunt. And with all these difficulties and differences with my parents, I could not stand the fuss they make over an engagement here."

"Why, I should have thought you would have loved it," Adelheid exclaimed with shining eyes.

Rabenstedt consented rather unwillingly. He was quite aware that every person in Stelnitz was in full possession of the news; he had been congratulated everywhere, at the Casino, at the skittles club, and at his hairdresser's, and he considered this mystery childish and stupid—besides he wanted to promenade the town arm-in-arm with his smart and richly-dressed "bride." But after all, young girls have foolish fancies, and very soon they would be married.

"I wonder which of us will go better in double harness?" Predow remarked as they walked home through the cold night air.

"The great thing is to get the step suited from the beginning," Rabenstedt said.

"Whose step?" his companion asked. "Your step suited to hers, or her step to yours?"

But Rabenstedt did not answer.

CHAPTER X

THE weeks which followed, Patience found both anxious and tedious. She and Frau Trenberg seemed to live amidst a rain of letters. Though an injured knee prevented Miss Duff from leaving England at that moment, she was exceedingly thorough in her methods, and wished for the most minute particulars about her niece's affairs. Had it not been for the untiring help and sympathy of the *Frau Major*, Patience felt she would have had neither the power nor the energy to carry matters through. At last an arrangement was come to—Miss Duff promised to allow her niece three hundred pounds a year, and to provide her with her personal trousseau, and the furnishing of her house, which, Frau Trenberg had informed her, it was customary for the bride to contribute.

"This will be enough for you to live on in Germany," Aunt Cordelia wrote, "and not enough for a man to marry you for."

Frau Trenberg was jubilant. "We married on far less," she declared, "and many lieutenants marry with nothing but the stipulated sum of a hundred and twenty pounds."

Patience had answered Mr. Thaile's letter, saying that she was unshaken in her determination, and begging her father to reconsider his decision. A short note was the sole reply, stating that Patience was disinherited, and that Mr. Thaile now

possessed no daughter at all. There was not a word or sign of life from her mother.

The *Frau Major* was so shocked and upset at this blow, that Patience had to attempt consolation. "After all, it doesn't matter much," she said. "There has never been any love between my father and me."

"No, but it is so sad—such a terrible thing for your papa to do. And your poor mamma. She is being deprived of the greatest joy and satisfaction a mother can have—to share her daughter's great happiness, to assist her at the most important moment of her life, to furnish and deck her home for her, to fill it with loving work and thought! If I thought I could have been deprived of doing this for my beloved Adelheid, I think I should have died of grief!"

Frau Trenberg wrung her hands, and rambled on, until Patience was inclined to grow restive. After all, surely she was far more to be pitied than her mother, upon whom all these lamentations were expended.

However, matters were beginning to straighten themselves out of chaos. It was finally arranged that the marriage should take place in the autumn when Rabenstedt returned from the Kaiser manœuvres. Meanwhile Miss Duff wished Patience to join her in London, where they would see to the trousseau, and arrange various business matters; they were both horrified at the number of papers and the amount of information required in order to marry a German officer. "You are so keen upon matrimony here," Patience remarked to Frau Trenberg, "that I am surprised it is made so difficult."

Still, on the whole, she was not sorry to leave Stelnitz at the present moment. Her old irresponsible, easy life was abruptly closed, and her new position she felt to be distinctly anomalous. Evidently her engagement was a known fact, and yet she firmly refused to have it publicly announced, and to be inundated with all the forms and ceremonies incumbent upon a German betrothal. Besides, she apprehended the flood of questions which would descend upon her, and she had no mind to have her family quarrels the common talk of Stelnitz.

As it was, the unfortunate Frau Trenberg was subjected to the severest cross-examination from different members of the regiment. Herr von Ehrich cornered her once at a dinner-party, where there was no means of escape.

"We know Rabenstedt is engaged to your Mees Saile. Why is there all this mystery about it? Surely they can marry? She must have money enough? She appears to be extremely rich? What are her parents? How much dowry will they give her?" Etc., etc.

Frau Trenberg, unable to think of any evading retort, got red and uncomfortable, and murmured that she knew nothing at all. But after one or two of these experiences, she agreed with Miss Duff that perhaps it would be better for Patience to return to England.

In the autumn she would come back with her aunt, and they would stay at a little watering-place about sixteen kilometres from Stelnitz, where Miss Duff could drink the waters, and where the wedding could be celebrated. By that time Adelheid

would herself be married, and they would arrange a cosy little family party, away from the curious eyes and tongues of Stelnitz. Meanwhile Frau Trenberg at her own special request, was to take a flat for the young couple, and get it ready for them.

Patience made some objections to this arrangement, but Miss Duff was so obviously relieved that she did not like to say much.

"I have no notion of the things that are required," her aunt wrote. "I am quite willing to pay the bills if Frau Trenberg will be kind enough to do the choosing."

"You know, *Herzchen*, you would have no time when you come back," Frau Trenberg said. "You leave it to me—I shall love having two daughters' homes to equip, and I will only get the necessary things that are the same in every household."

This pacified Patience. She was quite willing to let some one else buy the pots and pans, and perhaps a few plain chairs and tables and beds—the "necessary things." The adornments and frills she would see to and arrange according to her taste, which was certainly very divergent from that of the *Frau Major*. So she thanked her kind friend for all the trouble she was taking, and felt genuinely grateful that she would have such a staunch and helpful ally to come to her assistance in the new life upon which she was shortly embarking.

While all these preparations and arrangements were in progress Patience only saw her *fiancé* in the evenings. He usually either came round to

supper, or appeared shortly afterwards, and stayed until he was forced to go, and Patience could hardly hide her fatigue.

Though her head was full of the questions and difficulties, the problems and dissensions created by her engagement, he never seemed inclined to talk of these with her. After the plans and arrangements had been gone over once, and he had given his opinion, and taken the necessary steps, he dismissed all farther discussions on the subject. Patience would have liked some recognition of her courage and independence in defying her father, some apology and gratitude for renouncing her heritage. Despite the fact that she hated Colne House, she would have liked to tell him about it, about its beauty and luxury, its exquisite art treasures, its perfectly appointed rooms. But he had no interest for all this. It was certainly a great pity and an absolute wonder that the *Herr Papa* had refused his consent—but then he was undoubtedly a mad Englishman, and after all if the old aunt was stepping in, it did not much matter. Probably the mad father would relent afterwards, and leave them something when he died. Anyway his *Herzchen* was well rid of such a demented, unprincipled John Bull, and as his wife she would have a good position, and a happy, useful life.

When Patience had told him about Miss Duff's allowance, he had appeared neither pleased nor disappointed, and she could not tell whether it was less or more than he had expected. Certainly he did not appear mercenary, and she could only imagine that his gloom on the evening of their engagement, when he heard of her father's likely attitude,

was caused by the fear that their marriage would not be possible.

In any case, money questions and speculations formed no part of his conversation. Only on one occasion he came in beaming, and, between kisses, told Patience that he had actually paid off half his tailor's bill.

"To please thee, my mouse!" he cried gaily.

"Yes, and he is pretty short of cash in consequence," Predow added. "Yesterday Retzingk and I went to his rooms for a game of *Skat*. We thought it was devilishly cold, but when we looked at the stove we saw the glass door was quite red. So of course we thought the fire was burning merrily, and it must be our imagination that it was so freezing. However, when Helmuth went out of the room to get some beer, Retzingk opened the stove door, and there inside, if you please, was his little china reading lamp, and not a sign of wood or coal!"

Rabenstedt shouted with laughter. "If ever we are cold, heart's dearest," he whispered, "we can stay in bed, and if there is nothing to eat, we will live upon kisses!"

"The dear, good fellow!" Frau Trenberg murmured into her pocket-handkerchief. "To think of his going without a fire to pay his bills. Most young men would leave them for their wives to settle."

On the day of her departure, when Patience looked round her little room, with its tasteless but spotlessly clean air of cheerfulness, she could hardly believe that this chapter of her life was closed for ever. It had been such a happy interlude, and

she resented afresh the powers which had forced her hand, and made her relinquish her newly found and thoughtless youth so soon.

"One can never recapture anything in life," she said despondently to herself, as she watched the soldier-servants carrying out her luggage. "I felt ten years younger when I came here first, and now I feel almost as old again."

"*Herzchen*, where art thou?" Frau Trenberg's voice called. "Helmuth and Diedrich are waiting outside, and we must start at once."

Patience gave one last look at the little wooden bedstead, at the cross-stitched motto on the wall:

"Morgenstunde hat Gold im Munde."

Then she turned with a sigh, and joined the family.

The Major was shouting at the soldier-servants, while his wife and daughter were fussing around, collecting countless little packets of edibles to sustain Patience upon the journey. Bertha stood in the passage tearful, but delighted with the biggest tip she had ever received. She kissed Patience's hand profusely, and wished her a "good journey," and the speediest and happiest of returns—this last with an arch smile, for she felt quite a proprietary interest in the Mees's love affairs, and would doubtless be called into conclave over the furnishing of her flat.

"Wife, no more dawdlings," the Major called, running with nimble feet and jangling sword and spurs down the bare wooden stairs, "or we shall have Rabenstedt storming the house."

The two young men were waiting on the pavement, spruce and immaculate in their well-cut uniforms, large bouquets in their white-gloved hands.

Patience was afraid that she might be embraced there and then in the street, but Helmuth contented himself with drawing her arm through his, and walking on with her in front of the others. She tried to disengage herself, but he held her hand firmly.

"This is the last day, darling," he said, leaning towards her, "so I am going to have the satisfaction of walking arm-in-arm with you, and showing the whole town what a pretty, charming 'bride' I have got."

"But I don't like walking arm-in-arm," she objected. "If I were engaged a hundred times over I shouldn't want to."

"It is the custom with us for engaged couples," he replied, a shade of reproof in his voice; then his gaze travelled over the delicate profile at his side, over the bright hair waving under the smart yet serviceable travelling hat, and his aspect softened. "You are adorable, darling—you look a million times prettier than anybody else, even in the simplest clothes."

To his uninitiated eye, her plain blue serge coat and skirt and small winged toque seemed the essence of inexpensive modesty; he associated the idea of elaborate and lavishly adorned garments with those of his country-women who avowedly spent much upon their wardrobe.

Predow, walking behind, arm-in-arm with Adelheid, knew better. He had frequented Homburg and Baden-Baden, and realized that well-cut sim-

plicity is frequently more expensive than flashy over-elaboration, and he wondered how long the future Frau Rabenstedt would be able to indulge in such "tailor-mades." It was all very well for Helmuth now; he was preening himself in the admiring stares which followed his trim, elegant "bride" down the street, but later on he would probably be thankful could he exchange her for the economical little Adelheid, who was quite satisfied with her velveteen jacket of the year before last.

Patience relinquished further remonstrance, though she objected to this conspicuous procession; however, it was for the last time, and of course once they were married everything would be different. Besides, the others were so evidently pleased. Frau Trenberg bringing up the rear with the Major, could hardly repress her delight.

"Karl dear, look at our two love-couples!" she whispered, squeezing his arm. "Do they not look sweet?"

"Yes, yes, only do keep calm, wife. Thou art always so excitable!"

On the platform the leave-takings were of a most tender and tearful description. Not only did Helmuth envelop Patience in his huge arms, knocking her hat crooked and disarranging her veil, but to her surprise, the "irresistible Diedrich" honoured her with an embrace.

Frau Trenberg and Adelheid hovered agitatedly around, filling her hands with small packets of food, and pressing advice and cautions upon her.

"Mind thou dost not choose a compartment

alone, *Herzchen!* It is very dangerous. Some man might get in, and one hears terrible tales of murders and thefts in these express trains. Only go in ladies' compartments, and choose a seat away from the corridor for safety's sake, and wrap thyself well up, especially on the sea—the sea is very dangerous——”

“No more tears and advice, wife,” the Major interrupted, turning to Patience. “We shall have you back very soon as one of us, and we shall welcome you as the most delightful acquisition to the regiment.” He held both her hands, and spoke with that ingratiating amiability which conveyed the impression that he possessed the kindest heart in the world.

After the final embraces, Patience climbed up into the train. She had a blurred impression of flowers, kisses, and tears; then she was swept out of Stelnitz station, and looking out of the window, had one last glimpse of pale grey cloaks, waving handkerchiefs—Rabenstedt's huge figure towering above the others, swamping them in the insistency of his presence.

She lay back and shut her eyes. Yes, that chapter of her life was closed; or was it perhaps only the prologue to the most important chapter of all?

CHAPTER XI

PATIENCE's arrival in England had the effect on her of an inartistic anticlimax. Her aunt's maid met her at Charing Cross with the news that Miss Duff's knee was so painful that she could not venture out. A steady downpour was descending from a leaden sky, and as Patience leant back in the musty four-wheeler, opposite the prim non-committal face of Collins the maid, she experienced an irritable sense of disappointment. Having just come from surroundings where she and her affairs occupied a central position, having played a rôle which evoked unlimited admiration, she now half unconsciously felt that she was indeed a very important and interesting personality, who should be received with proper respect.

The thought of the enthusiastic "send-off" she had received at Stelnitz station filled her mind, and now this—— She looked out at the stream of traffic thundering and floundering past in the mud, at the incessant procession of dripping umbrellas, at the grim, relentless hurry and press of a London street.

"It always seems to rain when one returns to England," she observed gloomily. "I don't believe it ever leaves off at Colne."

"We certainly have had a very bad winter, miss," Collins replied in a voice as expressionless as her face.

"She wears as impenetrable a mask as a Chinese," Patience thought irritably, unreasonably annoyed at the absence of a communicativeness which had often displeased her in Bertha.

By the time the four-wheeler drew up before a small private hotel in Russell Square, which Miss Duff from long habit still patronized, Patience felt thoroughly depressed. And when her aunt limped up to her, and after administering a peck, remarked in her usual dry voice, "So here you are, Patience; this is a nice to-do we have had!"—she almost felt inclined to cry.

Yet what did she expect? Triumphal arches and a cheering crowd? She certainly had the unformulated feeling that she was a heroine, a martyr, a thoroughly interesting character to be fussed over, admired and praised. Undoubtedly she had been regarded as a most picturesque figure, and her vanity responded eagerly to the stimulus, and was quite ready to accept all tributes as the just appreciation of her worth. The emotional and unreserved display of affectionate admiration to which she had been subjected, while offending her taste had pleased her self-importance. With others to sing her praises and to realize her attractions, she had no need to perform these offices herself, and she had therefore shown an agreeable modesty in which she believed as completely as did the others. But in those deep recesses of her mind, where she never rummaged except under stress of some great moral *bouleversement*, the thought lurked that she was indeed a unique and rather brilliant specimen, a shining and romantic creature ready to renounce her parents, her country, and her heritage for love

shorn of material advantages, and therefore love at its highest. Which of the few girls she knew would have had the courage, the determination and the character to fight such circumstances, and to plunge into such an unusual alliance? The feeling which had always possessed her, that she was quite different from the stereotyped "young girl," had now crystallised into a conviction. For the last few months she had frequently been told of her quite exceptional attributes and attractions; and her native suspicion deserted her where she wished to believe.

Nevertheless, after her departure from Stelnitz, she had suffered considerable buffetings upon a shore of doubt. She dreaded the irrevocable in life, and she fell to wondering whether this quaint little town and its inhabitants would retain the same glamour when habit superseded novelty, and unevadable duty bound her there instead of irresponsible holiday-making. She had decided that she would put the whole question before Aunt Cordelia, who would be full of sympathy and of a new interest in her, and in whose eyes she had doubtless risen to heights of sentimental superiority.

Yet when the moment had arrived, and Miss Duff herself was suggesting in her cool, business-like manner, the talk Patience had wished for, the girl's entire feelings had suffered another complete revolution, and she was more decided than ever that the course she had chosen was the only possible one. Miss Duff's manner and behaviour were the last incentive to this resolution. Patience, fresh from an emotional experience painted upon her imagination in the most vivid and unrestrained

colours, considered herself a transformed personality, and tacitly demanded an alteration in her treatment. When, however, Miss Duff resumed the dispassionate, dry and rather cynical manner, to which her niece had been accustomed in the Colne days, the girl felt chilled and aggrieved, and flung herself back eagerly upon the warming recollections of the past months.

"There are many things I want to say to you, which could not be written," Miss Duff observed. "Because I am giving you my help, you must not imagine that I am delighted with your action. As we know, marriage is always a lottery, but if you marry out of your nationality, you multiply indefinitely the odds against you. Still, you are of age, and with my feelings for the rights of the individual, and my realization of your character, I believe it is better for you even to mismanage your own life than to be coerced into an antagonistic course. You will come to less harm if you have yourself to blame instead of somebody else. I believe that the man who is allowed to tumble down a hill is less bitter in his complaint than the man who is prevented from doing so by iron bars."

This was not at all the type of conversation Patience had anticipated, and she looked suspiciously at her aunt.

"Yes," that lady continued in her even, unperturbed voice, "it is because I know you would never learn happiness, tolerance, or philosophy behind your bars, that I am assisting you in this rash flight. I have satisfied my conscience by assuring myself that the man bears the highest character in his own surroundings, and having pointed out to you the

risks and dangers of your course, you have no excuse in the future for complaints and repinings."

"Why should I repine?" Patience asked uneasily.

Miss Duff gave her a long, critical glance. "You are too young, and too self-centred for the thought of your country to have been a very important one up till now, but I feel convinced the time will come when you will realize what the abnegation of your nationality means. Patriotism is an essential item in the moral code, and is it possible, at your age, to shed all inborn traditions, associations, and sympathies, and to adopt a patriotism antagonistic to your race and blood?"

"Other women have done it before now," Patience interrupted.

"We can find examples for every course of action we wish to pursue, and we can also quote apparently successful ones. But because a man has succeeded in walking across Niagara on a tight-rope, it is not an operation I should recommend to my friends."

Patience looked gloomily out of the window. She had expected cheering sympathy, and appreciative praise; instead she was subjected to this fire of disagreeable criticism.

"Would you suggest that I should crawl back to Colne on my knees, and beg my father's forgiveness?" she asked petulantly.

"My dear Patience, don't lose your temper. I should be criminal if I omitted to point out certain things to you, though, of course, I don't for one instant expect you to believe them. I imagine there are few women who are grateful to the per-

son who has disillusionized their love, even if it has saved their necks. As to the majority who attempt the process and fail, they court everlasting contempt and opprobrium."

But though Miss Duff's conversations caused Patience to flinch, they acted as a counter-irritant. Her aunt made the mistake of appealing to her reason instead of to her emotions, at a time when the former was entirely swamped by the latter. She had been enveloped by a warm flood of sentiment, and demonstrative affection; now she shivered at this chilling and dispassionate onslaught upon a side of the question which she wished to ignore, and which threatened her assurance. And as the natural instinct is to dread the dentist who has racked our nerves, so Patience felt a painful recoil from her aunt's relentless probings, and a longing for the large, soft, unquestioning embrace of the tender-hearted *Frau Major*. For the first time in her life, the girl experienced that desperate desire for the sympathy of physical contact which sometimes assails the most undemonstrative natures. But of this hitherto undeveloped side of her character Miss Duff had no inkling, and even had she possessed the knowledge, she would probably not have known how to use it.

Thus having failed in her attack upon Patience, who had wrapped herself in a warm cloak of remembered endearments, she considered her conscience might now be satisfied, and informed her niece that to-morrow they would begin their shopping.

The girl, who possessed even more than that share of personal pleasure in pretty clothes which

is necessary to the making of a real woman, found her wounded and harassed feelings soothed by this delightful orgy. And, certainly, if Aunt Cordelia was not sympathetic she was at least generous.

"A girl who is not given a proper trousseau is provided with a grievance for life," she once observed, "and grievances are the most dangerous rocks in matrimony."

Being an old maid herself, she was full of theories on the subject of the married state; and although she had relinquished further concerted attacks upon Patience's decision, she could not resist little skirmishes suggested by incidents in their shopping.

One day, at the dressmaker's, when Patience was turning herself slowly and delightedly in front of the glass, admiring the long, sweeping folds, which showed off so skilfully her slim, lithe figure, Miss Duff remarked when they were alone for a moment, "Yes, my dear child, you will have to renounce your expensive tastes. If a woman marries on three hundred a year she cannot dress, she can only clothe herself."

And thus, though Patience was allowed to revel in smart hats, cobwebby underwear, and all the fascinations of a well-equipped trousseau, her delight was tempered by Miss Duff's caustic tongue; which frequently reminded her that this was her swan's song of extravagance.

In other directions, also, her aunt did not spare her. The old lady was scathing in her contempt of the impertinent, petty red-tapism of German officialdom, which demands the most intimate and searching family details, and the most impossible

papers and data, before it will sanction marriage with one of its country's officers.

"I never saw such a fuss," Miss Duff observed contemptuously. "He might be a prince of the blood royal. Well, my dear, I hope you like marrying into a country where everything is hemmed in by laws and rules and regulations, and they know as much about liberty as an animal at the Zoological Gardens."

Patience, made touchy and soft by a diet of adulation, wondered how she had ever endured her aunt's tongue, and thought with amazement of the days when she had fled to her for comfort and consolation. What a light it threw upon the misery of her home life! Now Miss Duff appeared to her a singularly unsympathetic and uncongenial audience, who flavoured her generosity with the sting of sharp criticism.

"Your poor mother!" she said once. "I regard Colne House as her mausoleum."

Patience reddened hotly with a sense of remorseful reproach, but, after all, what could she do? If her mother chose to follow Mr. Thaile blindly and unconditionally, was that a reason why her daughter should sacrifice herself too? All the same Patience's heart was very sore, and when the boxes containing her possessions arrived from Colne she could hardly bring herself to open them.

When she had eventually decided to go through everything, she came upon a small velvet jewel case which she did not remember, tucked surreptitiously away in a corner of one of her trunks. On opening it, the green glint of emeralds shone out, and she saw that it was the beautiful old pendant

she had last seen on her mother's white neck. Immediately the whole scene flashed across her mind—the pale gold drawing-room with its subdued lights and its finished beauty, the firelight shining upon its solitary occupant, throwing into relief the graceful lines of the slim figure, the despondent droop of the white shoulders, the appealing loneliness of the whole attitude.

Patience's heart cried within her, "Mother, mother, why must we be alienated now when I want you most? Why must we be separated, and I miserable when this ought to be a time full of happiness and enjoyment?"

But though her grief for her mother was very real, it was tinged with an egotistical self-pity, a bitter reflection that she was again defrauded of her rights, and ousted unjustly from the ranks of happy maidenhood, whose due it is to be led to the doors of matrimony with all the paraphernalia of parental love and rejoicings.

The little pendant nestled in the laces at her throat as she stood on the steamer, and saw the cliffs of Dover slip away. Her eyes were blurred with tears, and there was a lump in her throat.

"Good-bye, England," she said to herself. "I suppose I am English no longer, for I shall have to adopt my husband's country."

But though her mind still failed to grasp the import of these thoughts, she felt the desolate sensation of an outcast and an alien.

She had burned her boats, and was striking out blindly for the foreign harbour to which she had pledged herself for life.

PART III

CHAPTER I

FROM the glass verandah of the little wooden hotel Patience watched a veil of mist and rain creeping slowly nearer. It was gradually blotting out the winding forest road, until only the nearest of the tall, sombre pines were visible—forbidding, inky masses, smudged on to a background of sop-ping obliteration.

The rain beat an incessant tattoo upon the roof, and inside a musical-box droned "The Blue Danube" a semi-tone flat. Patience, however, had the verandah to herself. Though it was completely covered in, the German guests at the little Black Forest hotel were nervous lest some fresh air might find its way through the cracks, and on bad days prudently deserted it for the cosy and overheated stuffiness the only sitting-room provided. The end of the season was near, and there was only a handful of visitors, but the roar of a babel of voices hammered on Patience's ears, and the smell of stale beer and smoke penetrated everywhere. She leant her arms on the blue and red check table-cloth, and tried to think; it was anyhow a relief to have an interval to herself, and to know that her husband was playing *Skat* with two hotel acquaintances in the restaurant. She had absented herself from the unbearable atmosphere on the plea of important letters, but now she sat be-

fore a blank sheet of paper, and felt she could never write a line again.

And yet what had happened? There had been no terrible catastrophe, no melodramatic event to account for her despondency. Every guest in the little hotel was struck with Rabenstedt's affectionate attentions to his young wife; they smiled and nodded when he slipped his arm through hers, and led her away after supper, or when he was surprised kissing her behind a clump of trees at the back of the house. Had anyone seen such touching devotion, such marital tenderness? Patience was observed with the intensest interest; some of the glances were kindly and sentimental, others coldly antagonistic—mothers of marriageable daughters could not but resent a foreigner securing such a model husband.

Patience smiled bitterly as she looked out at the sodden woods, the darkening atmosphere. "How stupid novelists are," she thought. "When they describe married life, they always make some sensational misfortune or terrible sin the cause of disaster; while the things that really are the crux they pass over without a word."

Her thoughts reverted to an incident, which, though apparently trivial, had assumed a painful significance in her over-sensitised mind. While Helmuth was still fast asleep, she had flung on her pale silk wrapper, and had slipped out in quest of the bathroom. On the threshold she had encountered the slovenly, over-worked little chambermaid, of whom she asked the way.

"There isn't a bathroom in the hotel," she was informed, "but there is one just down the road,

and if *gnädige Frau* gives notice an hour before, a hot bath could be prepared, but in this weather one would get soaked going there."

"Then I must have a sitz-bath in my room," Patience answered.

"Well, we did have a sitz-bath once, but I really don't know what has happened to it. However, if the *gnädige Frau* wishes, I will go and inquire."

"What is the matter?" Helmuth called, awakened by the sound of voices, "come in, mouse, and shut the door; there is a vile draught."

"I don't see how there can be a draught when you won't have a crack of the window open," Patience retorted, sitting down on the edge of her bed, and gazing despondently round the bare, comfortless room. Portions of her husband's weird civilian clothing lay littered about—there was no soldier-servant to tidy up after him here—the rickety table was strewn with a pink and white check tie, some claret-coloured kid gloves, and a fancy shirt of a dark orange striped with purple; one upturned yellow shoe reposed by the bed, and the other had wandered under the washstand. And a cold stuffiness filled the room.

"Why, heartsleaf, should one be so foolish as to open the window? It is devilishly cold even with everything shut. And what were you asking the chambermaid?"

"It appears there is no bathroom, so I have ordered a sitz-bath."

"Why on earth did you do that? They will probably charge seventy-five pfennigs for that entertainment!"

"I can't help what they charge. I must have my bath every morning."

Helmuth sat up abruptly. He did not appear at his best in a coarse calico night-shirt, with red cross-stitch braiding round the collar. "Look here, darling, I am most anxious to gratify your little whims where I can, but you must remember that we are not rich, and we cannot afford to chuck our money away on unnecessary and stupid things."

She regarded him with growing amazement. "A bath unnecessary!"

"Why, of course, it is unnecessary to have one every morning. Think of squandering seventy-five pfennigs a day on a bath! *Du lieber Gott!* that would come to five marks twenty-five pfennigs a week!"

He guffawed with laughter at the mere idea of such a *betise*; then noting the expression on Patience's half averted face, he added jocularly, "Why, my darling is as sweet and fresh as a rose-leaf, and if she likes, one day next week, I will order her a big hot bath which she can enjoy to her heart's content!"

He covered her with kisses, quite unconscious of the aversion surging through her—indeed she was feeling that blows and abuse would have been preferable to this primitive idea of cleanliness, and all that it connoted.

And so Patience's first matrimonial troubles were of an eminently unromantic and unæsthetic nature. She was battling with the realization of what two different standards for personal habits may mean in circumstances such as her own; and

the question of the bath seemed constantly to obtrude itself between her and Helmuth. She felt now that she would rather be tied to a person possessing her own views on this subject, and differing in all those considered so infinitely more vital.

She buried her face in her hands, shutting out the dreary landscape, and the check-covered tables. Surely she must be singularly petty and small-minded to allow such things the centre of her thoughts. If she had discovered that her husband was intemperate or violent, she would have the right to repine, but who would excuse her for eating her heart out over such unworthy, trivial things? She had read of brides weeping over their husbands' faithlessness, cruelty, or drunkenness, but she never remembered hearing of any case where the trouble was as crudely vulgar and trivial as hers. Of course; other girls were far too high-minded to dwell upon such things—it was too sordid a subject even to think of. She reddened hotly; then set to justifying herself in her own mind by reflecting that Helmuth had shown a general lack of fastidiousness which constantly offended her. At table he regarded the quantity not the quality of the food; beer tasted just as good in a vitiated atmosphere; and he would have considered it sheer affectation, after a long walk, to change his clothes for supper. Was she not justified in feeling repelled by a man who considered a little scent an ample substitute for soap and water, and to whom a manicure-case was a far more important toilet accessory than a bath?

A wave of fear swept over her. It seemed to her the most terrible catastrophe possible that she

should feel like this after a few days of matrimony. There was, of course, no one to console her with the assurance that frequently the first months of an enforced and revolutionary intimacy are fraught with more dangers than are all the succeeding years.

In marriage there are assuredly a hundred commandments which can be transgressed, and the unrecognized offences are frequently the most unforgivable. The process which, possibly, converts the drawing-room hero into the bedroom boor, may be more difficult to bear than unfaithfulness; and the man who respects his wife's privacy and habits, may earn far more gratitude than if he showered gifts and attentions upon her.

But Rabenstedt would have laughed at the notion that great delicacy might be needed in handling a young bride, and that caresses and endearments may, on occasion, be almost as brutal as blows and abuse. In fact, the idea of showing consideration in his love-making was one which had never remotely occurred to him. Woman liked to be conquered, to feel the strong mastery of the man who possessed her; and beyond that he did not reflect upon her feelings at all. He was passionately in love with his wife, and it was her duty to respond to him: she was absolutely and unreservedly at his disposal, and he imagined that the knowledge of this fact gave her as much satisfaction as it did himself.

The musical-box, ploughing through a pot-pourri of popular airs, broke into "Home Sweet Home." Patience leant forward, absently tracing a brown circle left on the blue and red checks by a moist beer glass. She was thinking of her wedding, and

rather a wry little smile twisted her lips. How distantly courteous Aunt Cordelia had been in her plain but elegant gown. Patience had never before seen her thus attired, and in answer to her niece's surprised stare, she had said, "My dear, what I choose to wear at Colne is my own affair. Here I have my nation to consider."

She had seemed so antithetical to her surroundings, with her unruffled calm, her undemonstrative aloofness. The rest of the party, sentimental or noisily hilarious, struck Patience as belonging to another world, separated from that of Miss Duff by an ocean of difference and discordancies. The *Frau Major* alone, with her golden heart and her guileless mind, could bridge this chasm, and meet the self-contained Englishwoman on the common ground of a tolerant and matured humanity. Even the boisterous Helmuth was quelled by Miss Duff's chill politeness, and attempted none of the jocose overtures to the "rich and ancient aunt" which he had intended. Indeed she saw very little of him before the wedding. He had perforce relinquished his adjutancy, and could not absent himself from the garrison before the leave granted him for his honeymoon. At the ceremony itself, he had looked splendid and imposing in his gala uniform, and Patience was sure that his erect, square-shouldered carriage, and his open, healthy face had made a favourable impression upon her aunt.

But when she came down the stairs, ready to start for the little Black Forest resort where the honeymoon was to be spent, a strange figure confronted her. It was with a shock that she realized this was her husband, denuded of the uniform

in which she had heretofore seen him, and clothed in the ill-cut and grotesque garments which constitute the usual attire of the ruck of Germans who have not come under the influence of English tailoring.

She drew back instinctively. This heavy, massive figure on which the cheap, baggy suit hung so clumsily, reminded her of an objectionable Teuton tourist who had obtruded his attentions upon her once at Interlaken. It seemed incredible that the stranger now seizing her arm should be her husband, and yet it was ridiculous that clothes should make so much difference. Surely it was the man himself she had loved and married, and not his uniform?

The tearfully tender and facetiously hilarious adieux of the assembly passed over her unheeded; she only felt her aunt's criticising and ironical gaze fixed upon her husband, who was shouting to the Major and to Diedrich, drawing on his maroon kid gloves, and whispering endearments in her ear.

But all that happened hundreds of years ago — The whole of her past life seemed a dream, and only the few days she had lived with Rabenstedt stood out with the flaming hardness of an unevadable actuality — Only a few days, and she had pledged herself for life —

Heavy footsteps sounded on the bare boards and she looked up with a start. Helmuth came up behind her, and playfully seizing her shoulders, tilted her backwards until their faces were on a level. His, she thought looked even redder than usual, and there was a blue-black shimmer over his massive chin.

"Have I left my heartsleaf a very long time?" he cried, kissing greedily the red mouth, the satin bloom of the soft cheeks.

"How rough and scratchy you are!" she exclaimed, drawing back hastily.

He laughed loudly. "What a porcupine of a husband *Schnuckerchen* has got! I will go now to the barber's and be shaved. It was so confoundedly wet this morning, I did not want to walk down to the village."

"Why did you not shave yourself?"

"Oh, I am not used to it. All officers go to the hairdresser's to be shaved."

He had seated himself close to her, his arm round her shoulders. She gazed straight in front of her, her lips compressed.

"You are too lazy to shave yourself so you pay for a barber to do it for you, and yet you consider it extravagance to have a bath."

He looked at her in surprise. Surely she was not already beginning to take him to task?

"My dear child, I explained to you what I think on that subject, and I expect you not to question my decision." Then, noting the ironical expression in her fringed eyes, he added lamely, "Besides, you could have three shaves for the cost of one bath."

"I understand. Cleanliness is the first thing one should economize on." She rose to her feet with a dry little laugh.

"Where are you going?" he asked uneasily. Confound it! she was not behaving in at all the prescribed manner, and he did not quite know how to take her. This feeling in itself made him un-

comfortable. He was so accustomed to ploughing on, with a light-hearted narrowness of vision, in his own stereotyped course, that anything unusual or irregular threw him temporarily out of his bearings.

"I am going up to dress," she said.

"That is another thing I wanted to speak to you about. It is quite ridiculous for you to make a grand toilette every evening in this little place where everybody goes in for simplicity and comfort."

He felt the desire to find fault with her in order to demonstrate his ascendancy.

"A grand toilette!" she exclaimed. "Why, I put on the simplest gown I have got."

"But why change at all? You are a great deal smarter now than any of the other ladies."

She shook her head impatiently. "Can't you see that it is not a question of 'smartness'? You spoke just now of comfort. Well, all the people I know would feel very uncomfortable if they did not change into other clothes in the evening, especially when they have been taking exercise, and doing all sorts of things. I have never yet found that slovenliness means comfort."

A short pause followed. Rabenstedt was feeling acutely that the only right course for a husband to take was to quell this high and mighty argumentativeness with instant decision. There was, however, something in the attitude of the tall, slim figure, in the poise of the small, erect head, which made him hesitate. After all, she was merely young and headstrong; besides it was their

honeymoon, and she was alluringly attractive. He would guide her with love instead of with sternness. He stretched out his hand, and drew her, half resisting, on to his knee.

It was almost dark now, and she glanced apprehensively at the door, afraid lest the servant should come to light the hanging-lamps, and surprise them in this intimate position. She knew that such things only amused Helmuth, who often refused to desist from his caresses in the presence of others.

"Heartsleaf," he said, stroking her soft cheek,— "How I hate being fingered after cards and beer-glasses," she thought, turning her head away— "my little mouse must not be angry, but must believe that her husband only uses his superior judgment and knowledge of the world to help and direct her."

He stopped, half expecting a grateful display of affection to reward his magnanimity, but as Patience neither moved nor spoke, he continued: "Of course I understand that my little wife is anxious to show off her finery, and make all the other ladies jealous. But believe me, my little dove," he added, drawing her head down on to his shoulder, "if you only wore a potato-sack, you would be a hundred times more beautiful than any of the others."

She lay still, momentarily soothed, as she always was, by the incense of admiration; but at the back of her mind there lurked the realization that the fundamental differences in taste, customs, and opinion which existed between Helmuth and her-

self, must at some time be fought out, and that physical attraction was the only effective weapon she possessed against him.

A bell sounded loudly through the house, and Rabenstedt gave a sigh of relief.

"Well, darling, there is an end to any possibility of your changing your dress, or my being shaved. We must not be late for supper. I can hear Herr Direktor Schlund's voice—he has such a big appetite that he will eat everything up!"

He seized Patience's arm, and hurried her out of the obscure verandah, across the passage, and into the heat and noise of the dining-room. A long table extended down the middle, covered with a coarse cloth on which clusters of bottles filled up the available space, unencumbered by any attempts at decoration. On the brown walls hung oleographs of Kaisers and Grand Dukes, and in one corner stood the large musical-box which had furnished such enlivening music that afternoon. If any of the guests felt particularly generous, they inserted a penny and provided a waltz accompaniment to the varied sounds of eating.

Though the bell had only just rung, most of the visitors were already in their places, busily unfolding their napkins from little bags, and fixing them on to the front of their persons. Everybody appeared intimately acquainted with everybody else, and they were all recounting their afternoon's experiences at the same time.

Helmuth bowed to the assembly, and took his place; Patience sat down quietly at his side, and dropped her eyes on to her plate. The open and

unembarrassed scrutiny to which she was subjected irked and offended her; she found this type of third-rate interest no sop to her vanity.

An elderly man with untidy hair and beard, and a general air of soiled shabbiness, leant across the table.

"*Herr Oberleutnant*, have you seen the paper to-day? There is a very interesting article on the general political outlook."

"Now, Ludwig, thou art missing the omelette," his wife interrupted nudging his elbow. "It is delicious, with mushrooms inside, so take a good big helping."

Herr Professor Grossman followed this excellent advice, and transferred a large chunk of omelette to his plate, via his coat and the table-cloth which both received plentiful oblations.

Patience watched this operation with ill-concealed disgust, which extended to the *Frau Professor's* dingy flannel blouse, unrestrained figure, and rather doubtful hands. She did not know that Frau Grossman was an excellent wife, and had brought up seven children successfully with very little money and much care and self-denial. The girl was judging solely from externals, and the unfastidious slovenliness of these fellow-creatures, who apparently could not be ignored, oppressed her with an almost physical feeling of discomfort.

"Yes, yes, an excellent omelette—luscious and light as a feather!" Herr Schlund ejaculated, laying down his knife and fork on the table-cloth. "Fräulein Marie, Elsa, Trudchen, or whatever you are called, please bring me another helping!"

The grinning peasant-girl complied with this

request, and Herr Schlund continued with his mouth full:

"As the *Herr Professor* says, there is some interesting news in the papers to-day. England seems in a pretty awkward position." He smacked his lips and lifted his beer-glass, "*Prosit, Herr Professor!*"

"*Prosit, Herr Direktor!* Yes, Albion's affairs are not in an enviable condition. What with their present Liberal-Socialistic Government, which doesn't want to spend anything on their navy and is doing its best to diminish their little army, and the Conservative party who trembles and shrieks whenever we turn round—I don't see what they will come to."

"Yes, yes, 'ill England,'" Herr Schlund observed complacently, "she has got into such a ridiculous condition of nerves about us, that I expect soon every German visiting the country will be watched in case he may endanger her safety."

"Well, of course Germany is the great ascending power of the world," the Professor replied, lifting a piece of cold meat from his plate, and placing it between the sliced halves of his roll. "We cannot be surprised that England feels a bit sore when she sees herself superceded everywhere by us. In all parts of the world trade has gone from English firms to German business houses, and why? Because we work harder and better for less wages, we are more thorough and farsighted—we see what people want and give it them as cheaply as possible, and we do not turn up our noses at the small transactions, but take them as well as the big ones."

Here he stopped to bite off a large corner of his improvised sandwich, and Herr Schlund burst in:

"Oh, undoubtedly, Germany is now considered the most important country. We find our countrymen taking the lead in every corner of the globe. The German of to-day travels everywhere, and all the outlandish pleasure resorts frequented formerly by the English you now find full of Germans. It is the Germans who are considered and catered for, and who take the lead in everything. In Southern Italy, in Sicily, in Egypt, I am told, there are German hotels and pensions, beer-houses, and shops where they cater for German tastes entirely. And why? Because they realize we are the powerful nation, that England is in her decadence and the Englishman has ceased to count any longer."

Frau Schlund, who was the most elegant of the ladies, and wore an imitation lace fichu with her stiff linen collar, gave her husband's muddy boot a gentle kick under the table.

"Remember, Hänschen, that the *Frau Oberleutnant* was English herself," she whispered.

The *Herr Direktor*, annoyed at being interrupted in his tirade, looked surlily across the table.

Patience was seated erect, her eyes fixed on the opposite wall, her body held in a species of forced rigidity. She was, in fact, controlling herself with painful intensity from jumping up and leaving the room, or denouncing the whole assembly for what she considered them. Herr Schlund, however, only saw the haughty tilt of her pretty well-bred face, with its crown of shining and perfectly-

dressed hair, the whole finished elegance and cool unapproachableness of her presence, which somehow conveyed that the rest of the community were no more to her than the flies on the wall. And his antipathy to her increased. Though he called her an unserviceable and dressed-up pole, he instinctively felt that she made all the other women look common and slatternly, and he experienced the desire to humble her if possible.

"That is all right, wife," he said in a perfectly audible voice, "the *Frau Oberleutnant* is married to an officer in our Army, and is herself a German now, therefore all her sympathies and interests must be with Germany. She is, I am sure, proud to know what a great and powerful nation she belongs to."

His little spectacled eyes travelled eagerly down the table anxious to note the effect of his words. But he was defrauded of any satisfaction in that quarter. Patience's face remained absolutely immovable, and it was impossible to tell whether she had heard the remark or not.

"Yes, yes," the Professor said, drawing a cheap cigar from his pocket, "the wife must always share the opinions and sentiments of her husband. If only women knew how ill opinions of their own became them, they would never pretend to have any. What do you say, *Frau Sanitätsrat*?" he added, amicably including the ladies in the conversation, "have you any sympathy with these emancipated women?"

Frau Schultz, a squat little person, with hair parted in the middle and plastered close to her head, drew out her knitting from under her black silk apron, and began busily to turn a heel.

"Do not speak to me of such creatures, *Herr Professor*. They are a disgrace to our sex. I have heard of women"—here her glance travelled down the table—"who go in for this sport and that sport, instead of bearing children, and who spend all their money and time in gadding about in ruinous finery. You ask Fritz whether I spent a penny on my clothes for five years after we were married——"

"Yes, and when I was married six years," Frau Grossman chimed in, "I had already presented my Ludwig with three sons and two daughters, all magnificent healthy children——"

"By the bye, *Frau Professor*," Frau Schlund interrupted, anxious to curtail the account of these infantile wonders, which she had already heard several times, "you will not forget to give me the name of that pension at Saltzbad, where they take you in for four marks a day, wine included."

"Ah, yes, and the food is excellent. You get five or six courses at mid-day, and nothing stinted. There is always enough to go round twice, and they often give you trout, and ice twice a week in the season——"

Patience touched Helmuth's arm. He was deep in a conversation with the *Sanitätsrat*, who had served his time with the 290th regiment, and knew all the older officers.

"I should like to go now," she said, "the atmosphere in here is making me feel quite faint; but please don't interrupt your talk. I shall be quite all right outside."

She rose to her feet, inclined her head slightly towards the table, and swept out of the room.

Rabenstedt drained his glass, and got up also.

"My wife is not feeling quite well, so I will beg to be excused. Good-night, ladies and gentlemen!" He clicked his heels together, bowed in all directions, and followed in search of Patience.

"What a model husband!" the guests exclaimed, unanimous in their admiration of Rabenstedt, and their disapproval of his wife.

Helmuth found that she had passed through the verandah door, and was standing outside in the moist darkness. The rain had ceased, but a thick vapour hung over everything, and the air was full of the sodden, pungent dissolution of autumn.

"What madness, darling, you will catch cold!" he exclaimed reprovingly. "You come out of that cosy warmth into the night air! Do you wish to get consumption?"

"I had to have some fresh air—I was stifling in that vile room!" she cried vehemently. "I thought I should choke, or burst out and knock all their hideous heads together! Did you hear the infamous things they were saying about England—about my country?"

Her voice was vibrating with anger. He had never seen her so moved and passionate, and this discovery of unexplored volcanoes did not altogether please him.

"I should not have thought you would lose your temper over the opinions of some ordinary hotel acquaintances. I do not see there was anything to make you so furious, and if you are going to take offence at every casual remark, life will not be worth living. Besides, the fact remains, you are not English any longer. You are the wife of an officer in our glorious German army, and

you must of course identify yourself absolutely with your husband's country, and forget that you ever belonged to another."

The mists were clearing away, and the inky mystery of the pine woods loomed gradually nearer, as if they were edging inch by inch towards the ramshackle wooden building, eager to swamp it in the black gloom of their spirit-haunted depths.

Patience shivered: the whole tourist element of scribbled-on benches, picture-postcards and beer tables was obliterated, and she only felt the indefinable terror of these silent, black woods, and of her own black thoughts.

Helmuth came closer, and drew her into his arms. "My little wife—my little German wife!" he whispered, "I have taught you to love in German. I have stamped my nationality upon your body and soul, so that my country, sympathies, and customs must become yours. What does the song say? 'She spoke to me in German, and kissed in German'; only in the song it was a dream, and with us it is a reality—a reality which will last the whole of our lives. And, my darling, when the blissful time comes of which I so often think, when you bear me a son, he will be a strong, sturdy German, who will grow up a soldier like his father, with his sword and his life at the disposal of our great and glorious Fatherland."

He spoke with an unusual seriousness, and his words struck Patience like drops of molten lead on an open wound. She felt trapped, humiliated, disgraced, and with a passionate wrench, she freed herself from his encircling arms, and fled back into the house.

Her husband lit a cheap cigar, and strolled towards the restaurant. "Poor little *Herzchen*," he thought complacently, "she is still shy and embarrassed at certain things. But what a delight it is to have such an unspoilt tender beauty in the hollow of one's hand, to teach the meaning of love and passion."

In the cosy heat of the restaurant, over a *Schoppen* of beer, he played *Skat* with the Professor and the Director, and together they discussed the probability of "perfidious Albion's" humiliation, and the ascendancy of the German nation.

Upstairs, his bride of a few days was weeping her soul out in a passion of bitter and hopeless realization.

CHAPTER II

THE weather had recovered itself, and a spell of cloudless autumn sunshine made the whole world seem beautiful. The sinister, dark woods were transformed into fairy-lands of delight, where the mystery which still brooded over them was the delicate mystery of elves and fays, of fantastic forest creatures, who surely must disport themselves in these green, unmolested depths of woodland.

One afternoon Helmuth expressed his intention of walking to St. Anton, a far bigger and more pretentious *kurort*, which lay in the next valley. He had seen in the visitors' list that two friends of his were staying there, and he felt a desire to look them up.

Patience had been extraordinarily silent and apathetic. She allowed everything to pass over her unheeded, and did not trouble to argue, even when he surprised the flash of denial in her expressive blue eyes. Her demeanour had caused him a slight feeling of uneasiness, but he soon quieted this by reflecting that women are nervy, over-strung creatures, and perhaps his young wife's unaccountable mood might be the augury of future happiness. All mental disturbances he attributed to physical causes, and his universal panacea was a good hearty meal.

He played cards and drank beer with the visitors at the little hotel, but, after all, they were not his

social equals, and he was so accustomed to associating exclusively with men of his own profession, that he soon began to feel bored with these inferior civilians. Anyway, it would be nice to have a *Schoppen* and a long talk with Arnbach and Seltenich, and hear what had happened to all his old friends in a former garrison.

"You will walk with me at least part of the way, *Herzchen?*" he had asked, and she had languidly assented.

But despite her inward depression, and the weight lying on her heart, she could not resist the appeal of such a joyfully radiant day, and her spirits rose as they plunged into the woods. The sun, glinting through the bluish-green roof of branches, lay across the towering, erect stems, painting them with tints of rose-pink, mauve and purple. The brilliant, springy moss spread a carpet on the ground which shelved down into unexpected little dells, full of bilberries, fern-grown boulders and pine-needles. The atmosphere was permeated with a delicious resinous odour; a warm aromatic haze seemed to float between the serried ranks of the fine old tree trunks.

They had to walk single file along the winding little path, which suddenly brought them out on to a high place, from which all the surrounding country was visible.

Patience gazed silently at the undulating waves of dark pine woods, splashed here and there by patches of beech and oak in their autumn glory of orange and gold. The very largeness and beauty of it all made her own personal trouble seem more insignificantly hopeless. What did it matter that

she had made a hash of her life? She might die to-morrow, and it would make no difference: everything would go on just the same, and the day after other couples would be gazing out at the same relentless beauty, which takes account of no human troubles and joys. And suddenly she thought of that evening at Colne House, when she had stood at the meadow gate, watching the glory of a fiery sunset. It was autumn then, and now autumn had come again, but a decade of experience seemed to stretch between the two. She had thought herself the most miserable, desolate creature on the face of the earth; now she wondered whether she had really known the meaning of misery.

Meanwhile Helmuth was loud in his expressions of admiration. "How wonderfully beautiful! How heavenly! They should build a little pavilion here, where one could rest, and drink a glass of beer with this glorious view before one. People talk so much of the beauties of Italy and Switzerland, but I don't want anything finer than my own German Fatherland. Art thou not proud of thy country, my little wife?"

He seized her arm, and as she averted her face, he pressed his lips upon the white curve of her neck. She endured it for a moment, and then stepped sharply back.

"How hot it is!" she exclaimed, pulling off her coat.

"Yes, I suppose we ought to be moving on. You must soon turn back, and not overtire yourself."

They continued along the narrow path, but the coat remained on Patience's arm, and she won-

dered whether it was possible that Helmuth had not seen it? She glanced hastily over her shoulder. How hot he looked in his dark suit! His yellow boots with their paper soles were creaking over the undergrowth, and his pink and white cravat had ridden round to strange regions at the back of his ill-fitting collar.

"I don't know how to put on such things," he had once remarked, eyeing the check tie doubtfully, "I was a cadet at ten, and have worn uniform practically ever since."

And Patience hoped devoutly she would never again see him in anything else.

A silence fell between them. Rabenstedt was thinking of some escapades he and Arnbach had shared when they were subalterns together, and wondering whether Arnbach would ask him to stay to supper. Patience was tired, and would probably be better for a quiet evening, and he felt inclined for a cosy time with some good drinks and congenial conversation. The possibility of any real companionship with a member of the opposite sex had never occurred to him. You only talked to women of love, their households, and their families. Your wife was there for your gratification, to bear you children, and to attend to your material comfort. As his was the reverse of an analytical or introspective nature, he had not formulated these thoughts, but they constituted part of his code nevertheless.

And it was precisely on these lines that Patience's own reflections were running, as they passed through the woods silently together. She was realizing how ridiculously little she had known

this man before marrying him. They had hardly been alone together for five minutes until the day he proposed to her on the ice. She had associated with him always to the accompaniment of dance-music or superficial chatter; they had never talked unmolested, and she knew absolutely nothing of his real character, of his thoughts, convictions and ideas on the important questions of life. She almost began to wonder whether he had any. The only thing he had spoken of with real seriousness, was his love and admiration of his country and his calling—Germany was the one country in the world, and the German officer the most privileged person in it. If she wished to share his enthusiasms, and penetrate to his deeper feelings, she must finally discard her own nationality, and identify herself exclusively with his.

When, before her marriage, Miss Duff had spoken to her on this subject, she had waved all difficulties aside. She felt a genuine affection for Germany, which was associated in her mind with gaiety, amusement and a pleasant life. It was in Germany that she had first tasted the pleasures of youth—Germany was the country which had given her a thoroughly good time. Now, however, she was realizing that the question of nationality is a much deeper one than she had imagined, that allegiance to a country does not depend upon whether it has provided relaxation and enjoyment; that the bonds of patriotism can be no more denied than those of family, and that in neither case can feuds destroy them.

On what common grounds could she meet her husband? He only appeared to care for kissing

and caressing her, for talking nonsense, and laughing at everything. One of his chief attractions in her eyes had been that he was such an entire contrast to her former life, that he knew nothing about art, and would have jeered at the waste of spending money upon old things.

But now she began to chafe at the limitations of their intercourse, to feel irritated at the perpetual repetition of foolish endearments and pet names, at the hopeless wall of jocular density which blocked any attempt at a mental *rapprochement*.

Her reflections were broken into by his loud, ringing voice; he was singing German folk-songs and student choruses, full of melody, patriotism, and sentiment. The echo repeated the stentorian notes, until the whole wood seemed full of them:

*“ Deutschland, Deutschland, über Alles,
Über Alles in der Welt!”*

“I think I shall go back now,” she said, turning abruptly.

“All right, mouse, we are nearly there. St. Anton lies in the next hollow.” He stooped to kiss her. “And, darling, if I should not return for supper, do not be anxious. Arnbach may insist upon keeping me. Can my little heartsleaf manage without her husband?”

“Of course. I shall go up early to bed,” she replied, trying to hide the pleasure in her voice.

As she watched his heavy figure lumbering down the hill, she breathed a sigh of weary relief, and sank down luxuriously on the warm soft moss by the side of the path. Now she could think, un-

hampered by the oppressive consciousness of his presence. But the luxury of solitude after the relentless intimacy she had endured was so soothing that she leant against a tree trunk, and let her mind wander in a vague well-being. She was roused by the sound of voices approaching, and half starting to her feet she listened intently. Surely there was something familiar in them? Then, as they drew nearer, she realized that they were English voices, speaking English.

Two figures turned the corner, and advanced towards her along the path. One was an elderly lady, small and slim; the other was a young man in a light flannel suit, a panama hat pulled deep down over his clean-shaven face. He held an open newspaper in his hands, from which he was reading extracts aloud, supplementing them with a running commentary.

"Yes, Mater, I am afraid things look pretty bad, and if the present Government doesn't alter its policy, we shall live to see the explosion."

"Do you think it is as bad as all that, Ralph?" the old lady asked anxiously. "Surely all nations realize what the unspeakable horrors of a European war would be?"

"Many people are as blind and unimaginative as jelly-fish. Listen to these sentiments voiced in the House——"

Their low voices grew faint as they passed down the path, both of them too preoccupied even to have noticed Patience's presence.

She gazed longingly after them, assailed by a gust of homesickness, a poignant realization of what an alien she had seemed since her marriage.

During her stay with the Trenbergs, she had merely felt her difference of nationality as a distinction—a difference which made her more interesting and novel in the eyes of her surroundings. And these surroundings themselves had pleased her so instantly by reason of their contrast to her previous life: her habitually sharp criticism stood in a blind abeyance, soothed by enjoyment and admiration.

Now she was apprehending the shifting of standards which must inevitably take place if one transforms oneself from a visitor in a country to a naturalized member of it. The vagaries of one's partner at a ball may pass unheeded, but when they are transformed into the eccentricities of a husband, they become intolerable.

She felt an overpowering desire to speak to these compatriots of hers—with a tightening of her heart she realized that she had no right to call them compatriots any longer—to hear English voices, and English talk, and news of what was happening in the country she had abjured. At that moment her eye was caught by a sparkle on the path, and stooping down she picked up a little round brooch of antique workmanship, and as unlike the German jewelry she had seen as its owner was to the Kurhaus guests.

"Excuse me, I think you have lost this," she cried, hurrying after the retreating figures.

They both looked up with a start, surprised at this sudden apparition.

"Thank you so very much," the lady exclaimed, eagerly extending her hand, "I should have been greatly distressed if I had lost this little brooch. It is of particular value to me."

Patience hesitated. This soft-voiced old lady was so trim and *soignée*, and the young man at her side so redolent of fresh air and water—she felt convinced that if he were at his last penny he would not relinquish his morning tub.

“Forgive me,” she said, reddening with embarrassment, “but I could not help hearing what you were saying when you passed me, and I should be so grateful if you would tell me what is going on in England. It is ages since I saw an English paper.”

“But certainly,” the old lady replied, a hardly perceptible note of surprise in her voice, “we are going to Schönbach, and perhaps we might walk part of the way together.”

Patience acquiesced eagerly, and as the trio progressed along the path, she was conscious of the first feeling of companionship she had known since she had been in this place.

“You were talking of the question of war for England,” she said. “Do you really think it is likely?”

The young man, who had not spoken before, advanced a step towards her. “Please let me carry your coat for you— Yes, not only do I think a war likely, but I consider it inevitable.”

“Perhaps my son takes rather a pessimistic view of things,” the old lady said gently, “but of course it is a subject which must be of vital interest to all people who care for their country.”

“It is not a question of pessimism,” the young man replied. “It is a question of the inevitable repetition of the world’s history. From the earliest times, the one nation which has established its

ascendancy, is attacked by the second nation which has gradually been working itself up to power, until it finds itself blocked by the first. The only possible result is a conflict between the two."

"And you really think that England and Germany are coming to that?" Patience asked quickly.

"Undoubtedly. Germany is expanding and developing so rapidly that she must find an outlet for her growing population and ambitions. She looks round, and finds that England has forestalled her everywhere, and has secured most of the available portions of the globe, where she has colonized successfully."

"While huge numbers of Germans go to America, become naturalized Americans, and are lost to their country for ever," the old lady added.

"I think if one studies the question at all, there can be no doubt that Germany considers England's power is on the decline, and that she is only waiting until she herself is strong enough before striking the blow. Of course," the young man added ruefully, "they realize it is to their advantage to keep England lulled in a complacent security, and therefore the German papers, and the German people one talks to, jeer and gibe at our efforts to wake up our country to its danger."

"Yes," his mother interposed with a laugh, "that fat doctor was saying last night, 'Poor, nervous England! She trembles, and is haunted in her sleep by the terror of German air-ships and German invasion! If Germany dares build a battle-ship, England shrieks and rages!'"

"By Jove, I find it hard to keep my temper when they talk like that!" the young man ex-

claimed, reddening angrily. "And yet I know it is not the hostility between the English and the Germans—though this increases every year—which will lead to war, but the larger factor of the evolution of the two nations."

"Have you experienced any unfriendliness or unpleasantness where you are staying?" the old lady asked, looking kindly at Patience's troubled face.

"Yes—no—I don't see much of the people," she answered evasively.

"It always strikes me as so ridiculous," the young man continued animatedly, "to pretend that by saying unpleasant home truths of our Teuton neighbours we may induce war, and that by pretending we are bosom friends we shall keep peace."

"Yes, and after all they were the first to start the abuse," Patience said, "and now their papers, comic and otherwise, are much more virulent than ours."

"It is hopeless until we realize that the only way war can be averted is by a government which isn't afraid of losing votes if it insists upon an adequate Naval programme, and upon some form of compulsory service."

"Does all this interest you?" the loquacious young man's mother asked. "My son and I are so absorbed in this question that we are apt to forget it may bore other people."

"Oh, no," Patience assured her, "I haven't talked to English people for such an age, and I am enjoying it thoroughly. I sometimes look at the German papers, but they usually only make me angry."

"Yes, I am sometimes jolly near losing my temper with the people at our hotel," the young man exclaimed. "They absolutely disgust me when they come in hot and unwashed from their expeditions, and the men march into the dining-room, followed by their fat, frightened wives, carrying all the wraps. And then the way they eat, and shout and stare, and make remarks about one as if one were a piece of furniture——"

"My dear Ralph," his mother interposed. But the young man, looking up, caught a sympathizingly comprehending glance from Patience's too-expressive eyes.

"Well, Mater, you know it's true. It's perfectly disgusting, the way they talk of nothing but food, and the fuss they make if one opens a crack of one's own window.

"Yes, my dear boy, from our point of view that is so, and I imagine there are few Germans who do not offend against our standards of taste and personal habits. But one must remember that from their point of view, we are equally offending. They consider us mannerless and rude because we do not bow to a roomful of strangers when we enter, because we keep to ourselves, and our men do not sweep off their hats to the ground. In fact, I am sure we outrage their rules of etiquette a hundred times a day."

"Then why do they intrude on our preserves? Why do they go to hotels which are frequented exclusively by English people? I am sure I have never known Englishmen to go to an entirely German hotel or pension. If they see '*Deutsches Haus*,' they rush off in the opposite direction."

The old lady glanced at Patience, a little afraid lest her son's candid talk might have offended her. Could she be a governess in a German family—she had said they were the first English people she had spoken to for ages? But a fleeting inspection of her attire and her general bearing negatived this assumption.

"I have known some exceedingly nice Germans," the old lady said. "In fact one of my oldest friends was a German. But one must realize that nine times out of ten, it is hopeless to expect a similarity in outlook, taste, and habit between us and them."

Patience had listened, carried away by the pleasure of associating again with people of her own nationality and ways of thinking. Her eyes, offended by the slovenliness of the Kurhaus guests, rested with satisfaction upon her companions, and she had allowed herself to take part in their conversation, impelled by a feverish desire for dreaded information, and also by the secret gratification of hearing her own inmost grievances voiced. Now, however, she felt that she had indulged herself in an unpermissible and rather mean manner. These people thought she was an ordinary English girl, and had talked accordingly. She must separate from them before they reached the Kurhaus.

"I must say good-bye now, and thank you so much for the pleasant walk," she said.

But the old lady detained her hand a moment. She had read perplexity and unhappiness in the girl's pretty face, and she felt an instinctive sympathy for her.

"Perhaps we may meet again, and have some

more walks and edifying talks together," she said with a smile. "This is my card. We are staying at the Grand Hotel, St. Anton."

Patience twisted the little piece of pasteboard irresolutely in her fingers. Of course this charming old lady would expect hers in return. She hesitated a moment, then, blushing hotly, blurted out:

"I'm afraid I shan't be able to see you again. I suppose I oughtn't to have talked to you as I did, but I enjoyed it so much—I should have told you before—I am the wife of a German officer!"

Without waiting to see the effect of her words, she turned abruptly and hurried down the path which led back to the wooden Kurhaus. She felt humiliated and ashamed of herself; she was guilty of disloyalty to her husband, and of meanness to these nice, new acquaintances, and,—though she was not conscious of it—the last fact worried her even more than the first.

But, such is the sensationalism of so-called chance, or circumstance, or possibly fate—when Patience looked down at the card, which she still held half-unconsciously in her hand, she read the name:

Lady Mary Cunningham Roper.

So this soft-voiced, charming old lady was his mother! Patience was swamped in an abyss of bitterly painful reminiscence and regrets. If only she had waited! If only she had not been swept away by her fears, doubts, impatience and passions! Possessed by an uncontrolled horror of her old

life, and by the hasty determination to be rid of it at all costs, she had thrown every consideration overboard, and had pledged herself recklessly to an unimagined and alien servitude.

Now it seemed as if the items of her folly were to be held before her, and summed up with a relentless dispatch—as if Providence could not wait to demonstrate to her the extent of her blunder.

That Captain Cunningham Roper's mother and brother should be the persons destined to point out to her, to make her realize the inevitable clash between her own nation and the one she had so rashly adopted, seemed the most cruel irony of fate. Above the entirely personal pain of her disappointed love, rose the black horror of a future conflict, when she would perforce be ranged with the enemy, when she would be fighting against her own country. And even if this ghastly catastrophe should be averted, if she should be spared its actual realization, she knew that the fear of it would always haunt her, that in the whole militarism in which she now must live, she would see a perpetual menace to her country—the country she could never disown or forget.

CHAPTER III

"To think that my *Herzchen* is really back!" Frau Trenberg's motherly arms were round Patience, and she was peering with anxious solicitude into the girl's face. "Thou art very pale, my child! I always say the wedding-journey is the most trying time for the bride. Young couples should go straight to their quiet home, instead of knocking about in uncomfortable trains and hotels. Adelheid, my darling, the walk will be too much for thee, especially if there is that jelly still to make. I am conducting *Herzchen* and Helmuth."

The young Frau von Predow, surrounded by a double halo of interest, kissed Patience.

"I shall come round to-morrow morning," she said. "Diedrich was on duty, and asked me to give you his welcome back."

Patience looked after her friend's retreating figure. What could matrimony with that selfish, conceited little fop have brought her? Yet she looked quite tranquil and contented, though there was an expression of gentle superiority in her face, which had not been there before.

"You said you did not mind stairs, so I took a third floor," Frau Trenberg panted, as they climbed up the steep wooden steps. "And, *Herzchen*, I did not want to trouble you with household matters during the happy time of your honeymoon, so I have taken it upon myself to engage a serv-

ant who asks very high wages." The *Frau Major* looked anxiously at Patience. "You see, *Herzchen*, you do not know very much about cooking and German housekeeping, so I did not like to take one of the raw young girls most of the ladies have, as they must be taught everything. Now your Marie can cook quite nicely with a little help. But then she demands twelve pounds a year!"

"Well, I daresay that won't ruin us!" Patience said with a laugh. "If we were in England, I should probably not get her under twenty-four."

They had climbed the last flight of stairs, and stood before a door festooned with greenery, and decorated with a motto, expressing in red letters the hope that the young couple would enter with joy and happiness, and that happiness might ever dwell with them. The expensive Marie, in a gay striped blouse, and of course capless, stood curtsying and smiling, while Paul, Helmuth's soldier-servant, was bringing up the luggage.

"Welcome, my little wife, to our dear little home!" Helmuth murmured, drawing Patience close to him.

Frau Trenberg had bustled in, and was giving hurried directions. "Come, *Herzchen*," she called. "How I hope thou wilt approve of everything. I have tried in all to think of what thou wouldst like."

Patience found herself hurried through the usual narrow, drab-papered passage, and ushered into the salon. There, planted stiffly on the claret and yellow square of carpet, stood the inevitable heavenly-carved, velvet suite. The uncomfortable straight-backed sofa was placed across one corner,

a table in front of it, a crochet anti-macassar veiling it partially. Another table stood in the centre of the room, with four stiff chairs grouped round. The brown and gold walls were decorated with a photogravure of the celebrated picture of Queen Luisa, two small reproductions of pictures by Böcklin—a present from Diedrich—and a pair of plates painted with roses and lilac. They all looked as if they were wandering vaguely over the drab expanse, deciding for the most part to settle down just under the ceiling. There was not, however, much wall space, as the salon communicated on one side by folding-doors with the bedroom, and on the other with the sitting-room, while a third door led into the passage. On the fourth side of the room was a bow-window, decorated with three narrow slips of russet velveteen, one draped across, the other two hanging down on either side, and supplemented by voluminous lace curtains, which effectually kept out all light and air.

With an effort Patience repressed an exclamation of horror, and luckily Frau Trenberg was too busy explaining to notice her expression.

"I thought, *Herzchen*, thou wouldst like this shade of nut-brown for the suite. It is so quiet and elegant, and will last a whole life-time. Of course the room will look better when you have some pretty ornaments and photographs about. It is wonderful what a difference a few painted frames and little vases make. But, anyway, you will not ever sit here except when you have visitors. This is the *Wohnzimmer*, your cosy living-room."

They passed into an apartment which at least

bore a more cheerful and habitable appearance than did the dreary salon. Here claret-coloured tapestry replaced the brown velvet; a large walnut writing-table and a book-case gave an air of occupation, and on the raised platform by the lace-swathed window, stood an arm-chair and a work-table, the latter decked with a cross-stitched cover bearing the words:

“Sew for thy house,
Sew for thy friend,
Embroider thy linen
Crochet and mend.”

The vast sofa, surmounted by an erection of carved wood-work, occupied one wall, and in front of it stood a big table in warm proximity to the white china stove. Luckily the Trenbergs' decorative resources had exhausted themselves upon the other rooms: only a wooden shield hung above the sofa, embellished with sprigs of daisies, and the following motto in poker-work:

“Where love and industry abound
There too may happiness be found.”

“Adelheid did that for you, *Herzchen*,” the *Frau Major* said, following the direction of Patience's eyes. “She and I have been very busy working little embellishments for your home, so that it should look pretty and cheerful. She poker-worked this for you too.”

Frau Trenberg drew Patience through the communicating doors into the dining-room, and pointed to another wooden shield on the wall. This bore the illuminating words:

"I care not to roam,
My world is my home."

"What a lot you have done for me," Patience said, swallowing down her aversion and disappointment as well as she could. "And I suppose you worked that, too?" she added, pointing to the side-board-cloth, with "Good Appetite!" embroidered in red letters.

"Oh, wait till you see the kitchen!" Frau Trenberg exclaimed happily, "it is so sweet you will want to be in it all day!"

Helmuth, who had been giving orders to the soldier-servant, now joined them.

"Well, little wife, what do you think of our little nest? Is it not cosy and delightful?"

"Wait till *Herzchen* sees her kitchen and linen-cupboard," Frau Trenberg interposed, "I know those are the things in which the young *Hausfrau* takes the most pleasure and pride."

She stopped before a large piece of furniture which stood outside the dining-room, and flinging open its doors, disclosed shelves piled high with masses of household linen—sheets, elaborate pillow-slips, and all kinds of worked covers and cloths, everything embroidered with the initials "P. T." From the edges of the shelves hung strips of white canvas, bearing the legend:

"Dried in the summer wind,
In the summer sun bleached white,
The linen here you'll find,
'Tis the German wife's delight!"

"*Herzchen* starts her married life with a splen-

did linen-cupboard!" the *Frau Major* exclaimed, beaming delightedly, "though it must be a disappointment to her that she could not embroider the things herself."

They had now arrived at the kitchen, and Patience, seeing its minute but spotless cheerfulness, was inclined to agree with *Frau Trenberg* that it was the nicest portion of the house. She looked at the rows of blue and white spice jars, each labelled "Cinnamon," "Cloves," and half a dozen other flavourings whose names she had never even heard. Ranged neatly on the walls were all kinds of culinary instruments which struck a vague terror into her heart. She felt Marie was reading her ignorance from her face, and had already guessed that her knowledge of cooking was confined to the making of cream toffee.

"If I had had more time, I would have made far more things for thee," *Frau Trenberg* said, "but I was determined thy kitchen should be as neat and sweet as the kitchen of a young wife should be."

"Why, you have done *heaps*," Patience replied compunctiously, her eyes detecting the *Frau Major's* handiwork everywhere.

In one corner the brooms and brushes were disguised by a holland curtain, with an inscription worked in red:

"Tidiness
Is the housewife's bliss!"

A canvas pocket on the wall proclaimed its use in the following cross-stitch words:

“When the lamps you trim
Please look within!”

while there were countless other bags and covers for the bread, the market-basket, the cloths, the towels and ironing-board, and each one of these things was worked with an appropriate motto. Patience, looking at her dinner-service, felt quite surprised that it had escaped this poetical epidemic.

Luckily both Frau Trenberg and Helmuth were too taken up with the attractions of the flat to note her expression of blank despair.

“What happy, happy hours thou wilt spend in this cosy little kitchen, *Herzchen!*” the *Frau Major* said. “Now we must go to the bedroom, and you will want to unpack.”

But the connubial apartment was the last straw to Patience's load of woe. It was chill, yet stuffy, bare, yet unhygienic. From the washstand—which also did duty for a dressing-table—to the canopied, cumbrous wooden bedsteads, from the yellow-stained floor to the drab walls, she saw only ugly discomfort. Tired, disheartened, and discouraged, she would have liked to fling herself down, and burst into tears.

“Of course the whole flat will look much more home-like when you have got your own things about,” the *Frau Major* observed, noting for the first time Patience's silence. “I did not buy any of those new-fangled, modern art things that are the rage now, because I thought they would soon go out of fashion, while these solid, good suites will last a life-time. Some of the young couples in the regiment have gone in for that queer-shaped

furniture, upholstered in some nondescript, plain stuff, and all the other grotesque things designed by those Munich artists, but I knew my *Herzchen* would prefer the equipment good and solid and serviceable."

Frau Trenberg stopped, looking anxiously into Patience's face. It would have been inhuman after so much trouble and care had been expended, even to hint at condemnation or disappointment, Patience flung her arms round her kind old friend. "How can I thank you for all you have done for me? You spoil me with your goodness—you have thought of everything."

"It has been a joy to me if only thou art satisfied," Frau Trenberg replied, her anxiety quite dispelled, "and now, as I know Helmuth will want to have his little wife to himself on the first evening in their own home, I will say adieu. I have got in all the supplies, and given Marie directions for to-morrow, so that *Herzchen* should have time to settle in before she need worry about house-keeping."

So much kindness, and yet she felt too disheartened even to be grateful! As Frau Trenberg and Helmuth left the room, she sank down upon a hard chair, and burying her face in her hands, tried to choke back the tears. And this was where she would be obliged to live—days and weeks and years would probably be spent among these abominable atrocities! She had never realized how ugliness depressed her. In the Trenbergs' house she had been too much occupied with her own affairs, too much carried away by the excitement of her first taste of youth, to suffer from the surround-

ing tastelessness. Added to this, she was riding on the height of a reaction, revelling in everything which was antithetical to the Colne House atmosphere, negating as violently as she could her old traditions. But taste cannot be indefinitely disregarded, and an eye trained to form and colour must soon recoil from habitual ugliness. Besides, it is easier to put up with half-a-dozen atrocities in a friend's house than with two in one's own. It was the repetition in another key of the fact Patience had just learnt, that tolerance is frequently a question of independence—that the instant persons and things become an irrevocable part of our life, we turn upon them the searching eye of a newly-born criticism.

"What, heartsleaf, moping already in our new beautiful home?" Helmuth cried, entering with his usual clatter and noise. "Come, all you want is a good meal. Paul has already laid the table, and we had better eat at once."

"I must, wash, and change my things first," Patience remonstrated, "and I haven't unpacked anything."

"Nonsense, thou wilt end by washing thyself away! Many doctors say water is very bad for the complexion."

"Really," Patience retorted, "yet I cannot say I have noticed such good complexions here."

Helmuth glanced at her a trifle dubiously. Though he had not remotely recognized the possibility of feminine irony or sarcasm, still he had a vague impression that Patience "answered him back," and this, of course, must be nipped in the bud.

"Thou art a very sweet, pretty little *Frauchen*, but thou hast still to learn that even pretty little wives do not know everything."

And having thus asserted his position, he slipped his arm round her waist, and marched her into the dining-room.

The table was laid with all sorts of little delicacies, prepared by the *Frau Major's* kind hands, and Helmuth, doing ample justice to them, was loud in his expressions of delight.

"This is famous! To have a pretty, comfortable home, a highly-fine supper, and a dear little wife sitting opposite! Ha! Paul, this is different from the soup thou used to cook for me on the washstand!"

Paul, smothering a grin, stood at attention. "*Zu Befehl Herr Oberleutnant!*"

"But thou art eating nothing, dearest. Paul, do you not see the *gnädige Frau* has no tea? Try this cold roast hare. Let me put some on thy plate, and this piece of sausage—it is terrible how little thou dost eat. The Schöналb Kurhaus must have made a nice profit out of you!"

Patience gulped down a mouthful of the sweet, straw-coloured liquid, but she could not eat. Her eyes kept on returning with a fascinated horror to the poker-worked shield opposite, and its motto seemed to burn itself into her brain:

"I care not to roam,
My world is my home."

So in the never-ending, dreaded future, this hideous, comfortless stretch of rooms must constitute

her world. Day by day she must sit on that awful furniture and sew, evening after evening she must take her place opposite that appalling poker-worked prophecy, and try to adapt herself to Helmuth's ideal of a wife. The hopelessness of it almost numbed her brain, but Rabenstedt, holding forth in his usual jocular manner, merely thought how much she enjoyed listening to him.

"Well, little love, art thou not pleased with our cosy, handsome love-nest?" he asked, offering her his arm as they rose from the table.

"I wonder how much oftener he will ask me that!" she thought desperately. Aloud she said, "Oh, I daresay I can manage to make it look all right."

"Make it look all right!" he exclaimed, stopping with a match half-way to his cigar, "what can you possibly find fault with?"

Patience let herself down wearily on the stiff resistance of one of the straight-backed chairs placed round the table.

"Of course I would not for the world mention this to the dear *Frau Major*, but needless to say, most of the furnishing is hopelessly tasteless."

He looked at her open-mouthed. "Tasteless? Why, it is excellent, solid, refined—just the same equipment as all young officers' *ménages* have. What would you wish different? Whether the salon suite is brown or blue doesn't make much odds, does it? Besides, surely you can trust Frau Trenberg's judgment? She has seen hundreds of married officers' establishments, and she knows exactly what it is correct to have."

Patience's irritation was rising. Her head was aching, her heart sore, and she felt an individual grievance against each one of the atrocities round her, which culminated in an agglomeration of resentment against the man who had brought her into these surroundings, and who stood there complacently admiring them.

"The furnishing may be considered correct here," she said icily, "but if so, complete absence of taste must be the correct thing in Germany."

"Patience," he said, using her Christian name for the first time, and pronouncing it in an unrecognizable manner, "I cannot allow you to speak like that. I cannot, as a German officer, stand by and hear my beloved country disparaged."

Her blood was roused now, and she faced him with her old resentful bitterness.

"That is very fine. You won't hear one word of criticism against your country, but I am expected to sit meekly by, while mine is being abused!"

He stood with his back to the large china stove, twisting his moustache, his chin stuck out aggressively.

"There is no comparison between the two things. To a German officer, his Fatherland comes first—a woman belongs to her husband's country. Just as I have given you my name and position, so I have given you also my nationality."

She sat with her face averted, twisting the plain gold ring, which had served her for an engagement as well as a wedding ring, and which Hel-muth made her wear on her right hand. There was something in her silence which caused him a

vague uneasiness; he changed his tone and spoke in a jocularly reproachful manner.

"It is rather a disappointment that on our first evening at home, you should quarrel. And it is not exactly encouraging for a man if his wife starts at once finding fault with his house."

Patience's lip curled. *His* house—why, every single thing in it was bought with the money she had provided! This fact seemed to her a necessarily humiliating one for the man, but she did not realize that it is such an invariable custom in Germany, that for the husband it is as much a matter of course as that the bride should provide her personal trousseau.

There was a silence, then Patience rose to her feet, and regarded him from under lowered lids. "I see it is quite useless to argue," she said coldly. "You will doubtless allow me to make certain alterations in the arrangement of my own things. I am going to bed now as I am very tired, and have my boxes to unpack."

Without another word or look, she swept past him out of the room, leaving him for once in his life speechless and crestfallen.

This was a nice celebration of the first evening in their new home! He had pictured his pretty wife hovering round him in a halo of domesticity, feeding him on tit-bits and kisses; and a cosy hour after supper, in the warm, brightly-lighted sitting-room, a cigar between his lips, a glass of Pilsner before him, and his adoring little *Frauchen* nestling lovingly by his side.

He swore angrily; then his habitual complacent good-humour reasserted itself.

“‘The Taming of the Shrew’!” he laughed. “Well, I think I am rather like Petruchio!”

All the same, his confidence and jovial obtuseness had suffered a shock, and later on, when he retired for the night, he tiptoed carefully across the passage.

“I will not disturb her as she is so tired,” he said to himself. But the thought flashed across his mind that it was a good thing his fellow-officers could not see his behaviour—they would undoubtedly jeer at him for a hen-pecked husband.

“Women are always difficult at the beginning,” he consoled himself, as he carefully shaded the candle. His wife’s eyes were closed, and she was apparently plunged in a deep sleep.

CHAPTER IV

As the following day was Sunday, Helmuth insisted upon a round of duty calls. Enthroned in the smartest *Krümperswagen* belonging to the battery of artillery—with Paul in his best livery seated next the soldier on the box, her husband irreproachable in helmet and new *Ueberrock*—Patience felt her mercurial spirits instinctively rising. Everywhere people saluted and bowed to them; the quaint old town was basking in an atmosphere of Sunday gaiety, and from the market-place came the strains of the military band.

“Listen, Helmuth, they are playing ‘Carmen’! I shall never hear the Toreador’s Song without thinking of the first time we met.”

He smiled down upon her. The remark conveyed an indelible reminiscence of the conquest he had immediately effected; he saw in it the awakening of a tender sentimentality which heretofore he had found lacking in her temperament.

“Yes, I, too, shall never forget that day. It opened the garden of love to both of us.” He stopped to salute a group of acquaintances, then continued with his usual easy transition from sentiment to commonplace: “It is just twelve. We ought to get the *Frau Oberst*, Frau von Ehrich, and the Majors’ wives done.”

“I suppose we need not call on the Trenbergs as we are going there this evening?”

"Of course we must. These are official calls, and have nothing to do with friendship."

As they stopped before the *Oberst's* house, Patience's mind flew back to the first time she had visited it in company with Frau Trenberg; now, as a member of the regiment, she was paying her respects to its chief lady, and as they passed the sentry in his black and white box, he presented arms.

Frau Brander was graciously pleased to receive them, and after a few moments of her awkward essays at conversation, the Colonel himself put in an appearance. Patience felt his eyes fixed in cold disapproval upon her daintily fashionable hat and gown, and he assumed his most condescending manner as he turned to her.

"Herr Rabenstedt's engagement was a great surprise to us—he is the first of my officers to marry a foreign wife." His tone implied so obviously that Rabenstedt was the first one to make such a fool of himself, that Patience's blood boiled.

"Indeed," she replied coolly, "I should imagine your officers had very little opportunity of marrying foreigners."

The Colonel eyed her suspiciously. "Yes, I do not encourage my officers to travel much, beyond perhaps a little tour in Italy or Switzerland. The regiment into which you have married has a glorious past, and a very high standard in the present. I insist upon simplicity in my officers and their families—any tendency to ostentation and extravagance I put an instant stop to." He fixed an accusing stare upon the broad sweep of Patience's plumed hat, and continued meaningly, "I

usually find that the people of the best family and position are those who adhere most rigidly to simplicity. It is the parvenu and the business classes who love a fashionable show and display."

During this pointed tirade, Patience had returned the Colonel's stare with an amused scrutiny. "Judging from appearances, I should say your regiment must be very select," she said, sweetly.

There was a short pause; then the Colonel turned ostentatiously and addressed a remark to Rabenstedt. He would teach this upstart Englishwoman that a *Leutnant's* wife must treat the *Oberst* with proper respect and humility. He had taken a dislike to her from the beginning, and was convinced she would exercise a pernicious influence in the regiment, with her smart clothes and her high and mighty manner. He must give Rabenstedt a hint that such hats were not suitable for the wife of one of his officers.

When, after a quarter of an hour, they found themselves back in the carriage, Helmuth turned to Patience. "What did you say to annoy the *Oberst*? He was thoroughly put out after he had talked to you."

"He was exceedingly rude and mannerless, and I let him down very easily."

"Let him down easily!" Helmuth ejaculated. "Don't you realize that he is my Colonel, and that if you get in his black books it may affect my whole career? Heavens, wife! If he told you you had a hump, you should agree!"

"It is because I not only haven't a hump, but have the impertinence to possess pretty clothes and some moral courage that he can't bear me."

"He is quite right to insist upon simplicity in the regiment, and to fix a standard to suit the lowest and not the highest income. If you wear a grand hat, all the other ladies who don't possess one are naturally envious, and may be tempted to rush into expenses to be as finely dressed as you."

"He evidently considers taste a crime," Patience said with a shrug.

"My dear child, you evidently do not understand the grand simplicity of our *Offizierkorps*, which has made our officers the envy of the world. As Bismarck said: 'Other countries can imitate everything we have, only the Prussian *Leutnant* they cannot imitate.' We gladly sacrifice everything, and therefore we are the privileged class."

They had stopped now at the Ehrichs' house, where, to Patience's disappointment, they were again received. She had taken an instinctive dislike to Frau von Ehrich, with her thick pale lips, her untidy hair and her loud, challenging manner. During the minutes she kept them waiting, Patience examined a salon devoid of the usual atrocities, and furnished with some taste. Several pieces of good old furniture stood about, and a plain brick-red wall-paper ousted the generally accepted drab and gold.

"What a far prettier room this is than most of them," Patience said in an undertone to Helmuth.

"Is it?" he replied indifferently. "I should not have noticed it, but I believe Ehrich is mad on buying up old rubbish."

At this moment the *Frau Oberstleutnant* entered, having evidently just finished her toilette. As she shook hands—Patience was now spared the

obnoxious curtsies—she examined the girl minutely with her prominent pale eyes, then drew her gushingly down on the sofa by her side.

“Who would have thought Herr Rabenstedt was such a sly creature as to get engaged so secretly,” she exclaimed archly. “As a punishment I shall send him in now to my husband in the *Herrenzimmer*, while I talk to his pretty little wife.”

Helmuth complied with alacrity. In his bachelor days he had dreaded Frau von Ehrich's bold onslaughts, which hardly one of the young officers escaped.

“And now, my dear Frau Rabenstedt, you must tell me how it all came about. How long were you engaged, and why was it kept so secret? My husband tried to find out from Frau Trenberg, but the poor old thing is so incoherent that he was none the wiser. What an old potato-sack she is! I am sure I don't blame the poor Major for frequently having pressing engagements at the *Residenz*! What she saves on corsets he spends on his amusements!”

“I think you forget,” Patience said icily, “that Frau Trenberg is my very dear friend.”

Frau von Ehrich gave her a quick glance from her shifty, pale-lashed eyes. “But, my dear,” she said lightly, “I have the highest opinion of Frau Trenberg's character. Only surely it is even greater fun to find fault with one's friends than with one's enemies. Good old Frau Trenberg is the most deliciously naïve person I have ever met. I came across her the other day seriously discussing with two of the young *Leutnants* the beauty

of the nude, and I believe telling them it would be far better if we went about without clothes! Can't you imagine the nice jokes they made behind her back!"

There was something so suggestively coarse in Frau von Ehrich's expression and manner, that Patience instinctively drew further from her.

"I am sure Frau Trenberg is such a nice-minded woman that she could talk of anything with impunity."

"Oh, thou innocence!" Frau von Ehrich cried, bursting into loud peals of laughter. "That shows how little you know men. If you were to hear the things they say once our backs are turned, you would faint."

Patience made a motion to rise, but her hostess put out a square hand with thick, white fingers, and held her firmly on the sofa.

"You must not go yet—there are heaps of things I want to ask you. Why were you married in such a quiet, secretive way? And I heard neither of your parents attended the wedding? That was a very extraordinary thing—they are both alive, are they not?"

"They are," Patience replied, rising to her feet; "and they did not come to my wedding because they disapproved of my marrying a German. We must be going now, so I am afraid you will have to defer all further questions to the next time we meet."

"What a disgusting woman!" she exclaimed indignantly as they drove off.

"Has she been telling you some of her nice, spicy tales?" Rabenstedt inquired with a laugh,

"or perhaps she reserves them for the *Leutnants*. She will ruin Ehrich's career for him, though there isn't much to choose between them. He was a fool to marry a woman so much younger than himself—and such a woman. Of course she only took him for his position, but she is such an uncontrolled little beast that her escapades may prevent his getting his regiment."

That evening at the Trenbergs', the *Frau Oberst-leutnant* again came under discussion, and for the first time Patience heard Frau Trenberg speak disparagingly of a fellow creature.

"Yes, *Herzchen*, you are right, she is a thoroughly nasty woman, and I do not think I am uncharitable when I say she is incapable of a clean thought. I tremble to think what poison she would spread if the tone of the regiment were not so high, and the *Frau Oberst* such an enemy of gossip. Now in Reinsach, where we were stationed before, if you spoke to a gentleman twice, they said you had an intrigue with him. As it is, I hate to think the bad influence Frau von Ehrich is, and the horrid things the officers say of her over their beer. I sometimes feel if we could hear them talk when they are alone, we should be filled with humiliation and shame."

They were sitting in the salon, Adelheid sewing rather languidly at a mysterious little garment, while the three men were grouped round the *Wohnzimmer* table, drinking beer, smoking and playing *Skat*.

"Has Diedrich been away again?" Frau Trenberg asked in an undertone.

Adelheid nodded. "Oh, yes, he has a tremen-

dous amount of 'pressing business' to see to now. He was out four evenings last week."

"Never mind, my darling child," Frau Trenberg said consolingly. "Men are like that, and everything will be all right in a few months when you are well again, and have presented him with a fine, strapping son and heir."

Patience, who had only vaguely apprehended the gist of these remarks, felt a sickening sensation of distaste come over her. She had noticed that evening that Predow had apparently given up all attentions and deference to his wife, and that the men sat comfortably gossiping in the sitting-room, while their wives were running to and fro, preparing and seeing to everything. And then at supper, when a discussion was started on the question of Bethmann Hollweg's probable policy, the ladies were excluded in the coolest manner from the conversation—when Frau Trenberg ventured a query, her husband silenced her with an impatient: "It is no good explaining, wife; women cannot understand politics."

Patience's blood boiled, and she could not resist a retort. "Perhaps your politics are so unsavoury that you would prefer we did not."

The men regarded her with surprise, and Predow raised his eyebrows superciliously.

"Perhaps *gnädige Frau* is a suffragette?" he asked impertinently.

"On the contrary," she said, fixing him steadily, "suffragettes try to ignore men, and do everything for themselves. I only ignore the men who allow women to do everything for them."

The silence which followed had been thoroughly

uncomfortable. Predow's effeminate little face had flushed angrily, and the Major hoped Rabenstedt would give his wife a good scolding for her impertinent presumption. Frau Trenberg tried to cover the discord with some amiable triviality, and Adelheid threw her friend a hurt and angry glance. What right had she to annoy dear Diedrich and set everybody by the ears, and all for some silly politics no one cared in the least about!

Patience was thinking over all this as she sat idly on the stamped-velvet sofa. She apprehended with sudden acuteness the position woman held here. As long as she was young, attractive and unmated, the men swarmed round her, inundating her with compliments and attentions. But from the moment she had been secured by one of them, and was no longer an object to be bid for, she was transformed into her owner's chattel, to exist for his pleasure, comfort and convenience only. And what was the reward these women reaped for so blindly and meekly accepting their servitude? They were regarded as inferior animals, useful only for reasons of sex and work, and never admitted to any semblance of mental equality. She raged inwardly as she thought of the disdainful and disrespectful manner in which she had heard ladies spoken of by these "Lords of the Creation." Evidently in their eyes all women were by nature swayed solely by the senses, though of course most of them did not show it as shamelessly as did Frau von Ehrich. Besides, each married man had the consolation of feeling that in his particular case everything was safe—how could his wife possibly look at another man

with such a fascinating and fine husband of her own? And all the while they might be as unfaithful and inconstant as they chose, and the women never even thought of condemning them.

At one time Patience had imagined herself the instrument destined to show these poor deluded women their foolish weakness, their subservient position, and to incite them to a revolt against existing conditions. Now she began to doubt not only the possibility of her idea, but also whether the women themselves would be grateful for her endeavours. Certainly that evening Adelheid had resented her attack on Diedrich, and Frau Trenberg was evidently apprehensive lest her sharp tongue should be turned against the Major.

"Silly creatures!" she thought scornfully. "They haven't the spirit of flies, and lick the men's hands adoringly for being kind enough to neglect and overwork them! And if they have any brain and wits, they hide them guiltily in case their lords and masters might resent it! Bah! if they only had the courage to stand up to the men, they would soon play a very different rôle!"

But that evening Patience was destined to learn that it is not so easy to effect a sudden reform when the upbringing and traditions of generations have taught men to expect and demand certain attributes in their women folk.

Rabenstedt confronted her, all his jocularities and good temper gone, his expression angry and aggressive.

"You have done a nice amount of damage for one day!" he exclaimed, "and have succeeded in setting everybody by the ears. The *Oberst* is

furious with you, and Heaven knows what effect this will have upon my career. Then you evidently succeeded in rubbing Frau von Ehrich up the wrong way during the few minutes you were with her, for Diedrich tells me she has been saying all sorts of unpleasant things about you at dinner to-day—that your parents are such common people that they were not allowed to appear at the wedding.”

“*She* is a vile, common creature!” Patience burst out hotly. “How dare she tell lies about my family merely because I refused to answer her impertinent questions?”

“Don’t I know a great deal better than you that she is a dirty little beast? But that is an added reason why one should not make an enemy of her. Then even at the Trenbergs’ you could not be agreeable and polite, but managed to annoy both the Major and Diedrich with your tactless talk.”

For a moment a constrained silence fell between them. Patience, indignant and angry, could not throw off the uncomfortable sensation that Hel-muth was not altogether in the wrong, that perhaps her sharp tongue had proved itself a greater drawback than the inarticulate slowness she despised so much.

“If you think that is the kind of behaviour, we admire in our women, you have made a very big mistake,” he continued. “We like them agreeable, pliable and sweet. You will soon find if you break in everywhere with your unpleasant, ill-timed remarks, you will become as unpopular with the men as with the women.”

She gazed in front of her, mechanically twist-

ing the bracelets on her wrist, while she battled for a semblance of self-control. So she was destined to be a discord everywhere! To her particular temperament this realization of personal failure, this feeling of thwarted ambition, was the most galling she could experience. She had imagined—fool that she was!—that she would lord it over the others with her ready tongue and quick intelligence; that the men would acclaim her as their mental equal, and the women welcome her as their brilliant champion. The disillusionment was too abrupt and bitter: she now knew that the men would fight shy of her caustic sharpness, and that the women would resent her revolutionary criticism of the men. If she wished for success, she must alter her whole outlook; instead of demonstrating the triumphant result of brilliance, wit and smartness, she must herself sink into a meek and unresisting subservience—she must listen dutifully where she would have scintillated, must serve where she had thought to command.

She made a final effort to hide her bruised and humiliated feelings. Then a half-choked sob escaped her, and she turned her head to hide from Helmuth the tears that were slipping hotly over her cheeks.

But he was at her side in a moment, his arms round her, his face again good-humoured and merry. This feminine and repentant fit of weeping washed away his anger, and he was ready to kiss and forgive. Of course he had always known that she was a high-spirited, unconventional young thing, but he had been convinced that she only needed the strong yet tender hand of her master

to train her into the sweetly-obedient and dutiful wife she would certainly become under his tuition. To-day she had been exceedingly rude, therefore he had been obliged to scold and correct her, to show her how foolishly dangerous a sharp tongue is in a woman. He must make her feel now and at once, that, though habitually the embodiment of good-nature, he was not the man to be trifled with; and he considered that he had displayed force without brutality, firmness without unfairness, in his treatment of her. He was quite aware that had Predow, or Major Trenberg, or many of the other officers, been placed in similar circumstances, confronting a wife who had undoubtedly offended against their ideas of correctness, duty, and taste, they would have subjected her to a far harsher and more humiliating scene. He hoped she realized this, but it was one of her baffling characteristics, that some of the things she ought to have noticed she appeared to ignore, and other facts which should have seemed trivial, she raised to an awkward prominence.

However, she now looked the personification of subdued and soft repentance, and he felt the mollified gratification of the male animal who has shown his strength and his power over his subjugated mate. He could afford to be magnanimous. As he edged closer, he noticed that grief was no disfigurement, that she could weep without snuffling or getting a red nose.

"Heartsleaf," he whispered in her ear, "thou must not cry any longer. I have forgiven thee, and I know thou wilt fight against the unpleasant sharpness of this naughty little tongue. Model

thymself upon Adelheid—she has always been most admired and popular—and see how quietly and sweetly she behaves. She is never forward, never obtrudes herself into conversation she does not understand. True womanliness is what men love—nothing repels them as much as the woman who forces herself into everything, and airs her opinions in a bold, arrogant manner. I cannot remember that you used to say unpleasant things—perhaps you are not feeling well?”

Her hands fell listlessly to her side, and she suffered Helmuth to draw her on to his knee. It was not that she was cowed, that Helmuth had frightened or subdued her. But she was filled with the hopeless irony of the scene, with the fact that those attributes by which she had thought to shine, were her chief offences, only excusable on a plea of ill-health. All the things of which she had been most proud—her quick perception, her ready tongue, her ironical wit—must be subdued and rooted out, until she had attained to Adelheid's slow, uncritical admiration of the superior male intellect. She remembered the day—it seemed hundreds of years ago!—when she had twitted the girl upon her tongue-tied and vapid behaviour in the company of men, with her transformation into a silly little nonentity in their presence. Now she recognized Adelheid's instinctive shrewdness, the primal, inborn knowledge, which teaches the female which attributes make her desirable in the male eye.

“You understand what I mean, Mouse?” Helmuth said, pressing a kiss upon her passive lips.

“Oh, yes,” she replied steadily. “Probably if

I live sufficiently long in this atmosphere and give my mind to it, I shall grow dull and slow-witted enough to make me the most popular woman in Stelnitz."

He looked doubtfully at her set, flushed face. Assuredly it was one of the most aggravating things about her that one never knew exactly what she meant.

She possessed that faculty—one of the most undesirable in woman—of making her opponent feel uncomfortable, even in the moment of victory. Helmuth experienced the disturbing conviction that she would always tarnish his triumph. But, after all, the triumph had been very real.

CHAPTER V.

“Is the *gnädige Frau* going to market this morning?”

Patience opened her eyes, and raised herself irritably on her elbow. A dreary, unwilling light filtered through the blinds, and the air felt raw and cold. Helmuth had already gone off to barracks, and Marie was standing in the door, a guttering candle in her hand.

“What do you want?” Patience demanded.

“I only wanted to know whether the *gnädige Frau* was going to the market to make the purchases,” Marie replied in rather an aggrieved voice. “The *Frau Geheimrat* with whom I was before would never miss going herself, and this morning I cannot very well get away.”

Patience stared blankly. According to her ideas, the girl’s manner savoured of pert familiarity, and she was in no mood to expose her ignorance.

“Very well,” she said nonchalantly, “if you give me the list of things you want ordered, I will get them.”

“The *Frau Geheimrat* always decided herself what to get,” Marie observed, “but of course if the *gnädige Frau* wishes, I will write the things down. And if one does not go early,” she added, seeing Patience slip back on the pillows, “The *Frau Geheimrat* says the best of everything is always snapped up.”

"Please bring me some hot water immediately then—a proper big jug and not that ridiculous one you brought yesterday." Patience turned on her side as a hint that the conversation was ended, and wished again that baths were not regarded as a rare ceremonial in Stelnitz. It was a matter of constant surprise to her that the Germans she had met should think so much of the cleanliness of their houses and so little of the cleanliness of their persons.

Marie's capless head disappeared, and her mistress began to wonder what her best course would be. To attempt to shop in the noisy wilderness of a German market, would, she knew, be sheer lunacy. She would call at the Lessingstrasse, and beg Frau Trenberg to come to her assistance.

When, however, Patience in her tailor-made neatness was descending the stairs, followed by Paul with the large market-basket on his arm, she ran into the *Frau Major* herself.

"That is right, *Herzchen*, my good little housewife!" she exclaimed. "I was just coming round to ask whether we should do our marketing together."

And so, under Frau Trenberg's protecting wing, Patience was initiated into the mysteries of the Stelnitz market. Followed by the two soldier-servants with the big baskets, they threaded their way between vegetable and fruit stalls, along avenues lined with meat, strings of sausages, tin pots and pans, and piles of brilliantly-coloured sweets. Everywhere the fat market-women greeted Frau Trenberg as an old friend. "Now, *Frau Major*. I have just the beans you want." "These ap-

ples, *Frau Major*, are the sweetest to be got!" The chill indefinite mistiness of the November morning brooded over the jostling crowds, the huddled shapes of the peasant women, the stalls of edibles. On one side of the square, rows of primitive wagons and carts were drawn up, the dogs who had helped to draw some of the smaller ones, lying patiently extended on the stones.

As they elbowed their way from one booth to another, *Frau Trenberg* poured forth hints and information. "*Frau Müller*—this old woman with a muffler round her neck—has the best fruit for preserving or cooking, but you must go to *Frau Schinder* two stalls off for the finest dessert fruit. This old woman with the blind eye has quite good vegetables, but you must keep a sharp look-out on her—some of her last potatoes were mouldy—if you want any *Kraut* for *Sauerkraut* or *Weisskraut*—and I know *Helmuth* eats both very gladly—you must get it well in advance and——"

Patience, stumbling after her, listened vaguely to these outpourings. The damp early morning air seemed to penetrate even through her furs; a slight drizzle had begun to fall, and the atmosphere was full of a conglomerated odour of vegetables, meat, cheese and unwashed humanity. *Patience* thought regretfully of appetizing luxurious stores, of trim tradesmen's carts delivering all supplies at the door, and wondered why household shopping could not be done on the same lines here. Every minute they ran into other regimental ladies, all bound on the same errand, followed either by the maid-servant or the *Bursche* carrying an over-stocked basket.

"You see even Frau von Remmingen does her own marketing," Frau Trenberg said, "although she is very rich. We German wives would not for the world be deprived of the pleasure of household duties."

She stopped to bargain over a large cabbage, examining it with critical knowledge. "It is watery and flavourless—no, you must take off ten pfennigs."

"I assure the *Frau Major*, the Frau Hauptmann von Remmingen just paid the same amount for a far smaller one."

But Frau Trenberg triumphed, and the red cabbage was transferred to the market-basket and Schmidt's care.

"Where is your Paul?" Frau Trenberg exclaimed, looking round. "Ah, I know, he is after some pretty girl. You will have to train him, *Herzchen*, or you will never see him or the basket till you get home. Now what have you got to buy?"

Patience fumbled in her large muff, and produced Marie's list. After examining it, the *Frau Major* frowned. "I am afraid the girl is extravagant. You will have to keep a sharp eye on her and buy what you think is needed. What does she want so much butter for? She surely does not use it for cooking? And eggs and flour and almonds—what can she have used up all that flour on which I ordered before you came?"

When at last all the purchases had been made—not without lengthy discussions with each market-woman—and the things were confided to Paul, who had been retrieved, grinning, from his little excursion, Patience felt frozen, bored, and

tired. She had not had time for any breakfast before leaving the house, and she thought with horror of the repetition of this experience two or three times every week.

On her return, Helmuth opened the door. He was in his grey *Literwka*, and was stamping his feet and rubbing his hands together.

"Beastly cold this morning. That's right that you are back. I waited for my coffee till we could have it together, but I don't know what has happened to that Marie—I believe she is flirting with an orderly in the yard. Perhaps you will go into the kitchen now, and see whether she has at least put the coffee on the stove."

Patience half turned to him, a scathing remark on her lips; then she recollected yesterday evening's scene, with the bitter lesson it had taught her, and she shut them tightly. He would, of course, be amazed and angry if she started making grievances of those things which he regarded as right and natural. Had she known it, he was exercising great forbearance in not reprimanding her for dawdling at the market, and not being there to serve him with hot coffee on his return.

She stumbled into the kitchen and looked round her helplessly, but there were no signs either of the coffee or of Marie. However, on opening the window, she saw her pert domestic pretending to hang some clothes on a line, but really employing all her energies in flirting with an orderly who had brought some papers for Helmuth. Of course the girl realized that her mistress was ignorant and inefficient, and she could therefore do as she pleased. Patience thought with a wry little laugh of the

manner in which Frau Trenberg and the other ladies treated their servants, with what a strange mixture of severity and familiarity. The girls, however, respected them, for was not their knowledge of cooking great, and would not one willingly obey a mistress who made pastry as light as a feather, and who could detect if the soufflé had been left one minute too long on the fire?

Patience wondered whether she would ever master the art of cooking, and the hours she spent in the little kitchen were among the most humiliating and fatiguing she had known. Though she had understood that Marie was an efficient cook, she found that the girl expected help in everything, and was not prepared to send in one meal unassisted. "The *Frau Geheimrat* always made all the puddings." "The *Frau Geheimrat* always said the lady should make the stuffings and sauces herself," Patience was continually informed, until she loathed the very name of the *Frau Geheimrat*, and at last, in a burst of irritation, told Marie she never wished to hear the lady mentioned again. Marie had looked pertly aggrieved. What rights had a mistress who did not know a cullender from an egg-whisk, and who thought meat was just flung into the oven without being prepared first? How was it possible to feel anything but contempt for such appalling ingorance?

Many times Patience, hot, weary, her back and head aching, her clothes and hair permeated with the detested smell of cooking, had sunk down to the midday meal, feeling she never wished to see food again. And then the humiliating disappointment when the vegetables were burnt and sodden,

and the gelatine sat in a solid mass at the bottom of her pudding!

Helmuth was extraordinarily good-humoured over her culinary blunders. "Never mind, little wife," he would say encouragingly, "you will have better luck next time!" She felt convinced he would rather she spent her time over a burnt omelette than over a successful work of art.

But her patience and resolution would soon have given way, had not Frau Trenberg come to her assistance. That good lady once surprised her *Herzchen* alone in the kitchen, angrily flinging one of her failures down the sink.

She looked up, her face flushed, her hair disordered. "I *hate* cooking! It spoils one's temper, one's hands, and one's health! It's far less tiring to play three rounds of golf than to make a couple of fritters. Besides, it is such waste—waste of the fritters and of me. No, I have honestly done my best, and now I am going to give up the beastly thing and make Marie manage alone!"

Frau Trenberg, smiling tranquilly, had taken off her hat and coat, and had produced from a parcel a large print over-all, into which she proceeded to insert her ample person.

"Patience!" she said with a laugh, "I shall call you my little Impatience. How can you expect to learn from to-day till to-morrow an art in which our daughters are instructed from their earliest youth? And as to saying you will give the whole thing up—that you must never do. I would not for the world allow my *Herzchen* to be looked down upon by every lady and little maid-servant in Stel-

nitz as ignorant and undomesticated. No, I will give you lessons, and you are so sharp and clever you will soon learn."

But matters did not progress as rapidly as either teacher or pupil hoped. Frau Trenberg had to cope with an ignorance of the most elementary things, such as the proper way of stirring a pudding or beating an egg, and Patience found standing in the hot kitchen atmosphere so trying that she constantly complained of headaches and fatigue. It was quite amusing to watch Frau Trenberg's skilful fingers making all manner of cakes, and perhaps to help her stamp patterns upon them, and range them neatly on the baking-trays. But when it was a question of standing morning after morning, irrespective of inclination, beating and dressing meat, or learning to prepare game and fish, then the kitchen became Patience's bugbear, and she loathed the sight of food and the uncongenial drudgery of assisting through all its stages, with her old bitter abandonment of feeling.

Several times, when she was in the throes of battling with the midday meal, hot and dishevelled, saturated with the abhorred kitchen aroma, the bell would ring, and Paul would announce some of the regimental ladies who were paying her their return calls. It was a constant amazement to her that the Germans, who consider themselves so practical, should tolerate this custom. That the most correct hour for visiting should be between twelve and one, just at the time when the housewife is expected to be busy in the kitchen assisting in the preparation of the chief meal, seemed to her inexplicable. With this system there were

only two courses open: either definitely to refuse all callers—and this would not have been considered courteous—or to appear, hot and untidy, with reddened hands and face, and the haunting apprehension that something would be burnt or forgotten. No cosy chats over a fire and a silver-laden tea-table, but seven minutes of conventional commonplaces, seated in stiff discomfort.

One day Helmuth informed his wife that on the following Saturday the officers had a big *Liebesmahl* at the Casino. Three of the lieutenants had birthdays, and to celebrate this a great deal of liquid would probably be consumed. Patience was already planning what she would do with her evening of liberty, when a note arrived from Frau von Ehrich, saying she hoped all the ladies of the regiment would come to a "coffee party" at her house while their husbands were away. This invitation she was, much against her will, forced to accept. She was already acquainted with these feminine gatherings, and felt no liking for them whatever, though she now realized that they formed an unavoidable part of the life she had chosen.

On the evening in question she was wrapping herself in her long fur coat, preparatory to starting, when Helmuth hurried into the sitting-room.

"I cannot find the key of the cash-box," he ejaculated.

Patience raised her eye-brows. "I hid it in a safer place. It seems to me most rash to keep so much money in the house."

"Nonsense," he said as she handed him the key, and he crossed over with it to the writing-table, "everybody keeps their money in this way."

It had been an amazement to her to find that no system of cheques pertained here. Her money was deposited in the Stelnitz bank, and a quarterly instalment had been drawn out and placed in a cash-box in Helmuth's bureau. Apparently they were both to help themselves when necessary, but up till now Patience had used some loose gold she had in her purse, to defray the daily household expenses. There were no tradesmen's books, but Frau Trenberg told her that both Marie and the soldier-servant must be given money, and made to keep an account of all the small commissions they did, for her to inspect and check. Two grimy documents had already been submitted to her, but she had failed to decipher any of the hieroglyphics, and had returned them without comment, assuming them to be correct. There seemed an appalling number of small items, twopences and threepences and half-farthings, which were all paid separately, and each one of which she was aware ought to be entered in her household accounts. Though she knew very little of such matters, she was relieved to see that they appeared to be living most economically. Surely three hundred pounds would go a very long way at this rate?

As she watched Helmuth transferring a handful of coins from the box to his pocket, she wondered idly what happened to his pay.

"Don't you soon get your money?" she asked, buttoning up her glove.

"Bless you, I shall not see any of that for many months to come," he laughed, shutting the drawer with a snap. "Every pfennig of it will have to go to pay my old bills. The moment they heard

I was engaged, all the devils were down on me to settle up my debts."

"Have you so very many?" she inquired anxiously.

"Heavens, no," he answered, jangling the coins in his pocket. "Wonderfully few considering, but I should like to know what *Leutnant* has not some debts? Our pay is so wretchedly inadequate, and we see precious little of it after one thing and another has been deducted. Then so much is expected of us—an officer must always be tip-top in everything. Besides, we don't understand about money—we leave that to tradespeople and Jews. Why, I never possessed more than a few marks until I joined my regiment, and then when I received my first *Leutnant's* pay, I thought it a fortune I could never exhaust! A cadet has not much experience of money, I can tell you."

"But how did you manage then when you were so poor?"

Helmuth shrugged his shoulders light-heartedly. "When I had not got the money I could not spend it. If I allowed myself a 'bust' at the beginning of the month, I had to live on bread and cheese at the end. Do you know what I did with my first pay when I was a subaltern of nineteen? After all the gold pieces had been given me, I thought I was a Croesus and rushed out and bought a beautiful camera and a fine crystal punch-bowl I took a fancy to!" He burst into stentorian peals of laughter at the remembrance. "Of course in a very short time I had popped them both for an eighth of their cost, and was living on thin soup and regrets!"

"Well, we neither of us seem to know much about finance," Patience observed. "We shall have to be very careful."

"Don't you worry, heartsleaf. Anyhow, you will be all right. That is the advantage of a trousseau—you won't want any clothes for years. I wish I had a 'rich and ancient aunt' to give me one!"

He crossed over to her side. How charming she looked with the light shining on the coils of her fair hair, and on her pretty, well-bred little face! The hem of her mauve gown and one daintily-shod foot peeped out from under the fur coat, and she was swinging a gold chain bag in her hand. Suddenly the thought struck him that she was far more an *objet de luxe* than a solid, serviceable, working partner. Something in her appearance, in the care and finish of all its details, conveyed instinctively to him the impression that she might prove an expensive luxury, that she might wish to spend money on herself. Then the recollection of burnt puddings and dried-up meat flashed across his mind—were they compensated for by a satin skin and a kissable mouth? Bah! she would learn her duties in time; besides with six thousand marks annually and the most attractive woman in the place, one ought not to grumble.

He stooped and kissed her. "Well, good-night, little one. Of course Paul will conduct you there and fetch you when your gossip-party is over."

"That isn't at all necessary. Why, the Eh-rihs live just round the corner."

"All the same it would not be correct for you

to go unprotected. Hullo, Paul, thou dormouse! Come at once to escort the *gnädige Frau*."

"I wonder when I shall master all the things that are considered 'incorrect,'" Patience remarked as they passed into the passage, where Paul was waiting, standing rigid, his hands on his trouser seams.

Helmuth did not hear. "Much enjoyment, heartsleaf. Do not tear your husbands quite to pieces and we will spare the ladies' reputations! And do not wait up for me—it will probably go on very late to-night."

When Patience arrived, she found most of the ladies taking off their hats and wraps in Frau von Ehrich's bedroom. In contradistinction to the rest of the flat, the connubial apartment was bare, comfortless, and ugly. The dressing-table was covered with a strip of oilcloth, and devoid of any dainty toilet appliances; only a brush-and-comb bag, with a seven-pointed coronet embroidered on it, lay in solitary pomp. The yellow boards were innocent of any carpet or mats, and evidently the only method of warming employed was that of keeping all windows rigidly closed.

Many greetings were interchanged, and the assembly surged into the salon, talking and laughing. In most respects the party was an exact replica of the one given by Frau Stoll; in fact, Patience was to learn that at these "ladies' coffees" the only variation ever to be hoped for was the alternative of a cream meringue or an ice-pudding served with the wine. Now, instead of sitting with the young girls, she found herself enthroned with

the matrons, from whose conversation she had previously been debarred.

Kind Frau Winkmar, who had made a point of speaking to her, managed, as they took their places at the table, to secure a chair at her side. "Frau Rabenstedt and I have a lot to talk about," she said in her pleasant voice. Frau Trenberg smiled at them from the opposite end, where she was being patronized by Frau von Ehrich. Adelheid was not present: the interesting event was drawing near, and she was not supposed to exert herself, though she still continued to cook her husband's meals. Patience was surprised at the candour with which her prospects were discussed. Most of the ladies affirmed that it was the happiest thing to start a family as soon as possible after marriage, and they openly pitied young Frau von Vorbach who had been married two years, and was still passed over by the stork. Frau Stoll was the pride of the regiment: she had had eight children with the minimum of delay; and Leutnant Henzel's wife made a good second—though she had only been married three years, she had already given birth to boy twins and a little girl who had arrived that autumn. They were desperately poor; she was a pastor's daughter with hardly any dowry, and they had married on little except debts. In fact, it was only owing to a small legacy that they had been able to scrape together the necessary sum without which no officer may marry. It was a desperate struggle to keep up appearances and make both ends meet, and what would happen when the young family—and it was sure to increase yearly—grew up, seemed difficult to say. How-

ever, the sons could always be put into cadet schools when they reached the age of ten, and there they cost very little. Meanwhile Frau Henzel was ready and pleased to scrape and save and work her fingers to the bone. It had never occurred to her, or to anybody else, that it might be rash to bring children into the world with no means of providing for them. Already she looked faded and worn and elderly. Patience was horrified to learn that she was only a year older than herself, and fell to wondering at the rapidity with which these women aged.

"It seems incredible," she said to Frau Winkmar, "that Frau Henzel should only be a year older than I am. I feel about ten years younger than she looks."

"Yes, my dear, there are two things which age people more quickly than anything else—worry and manual work. I daresay even in England your wives have plenty of the first, but I don't suppose those belonging to our class know much of the second."

"You mean that everlasting cooking?"

"Yes, cooking and a hundred other things. Many ladies cannot afford to keep a maid-servant besides the soldier-servant, or only have one in for a few hours every day. Then the whole brunt of the household work falls on them. They have to cook and wash and keep the house going, and themselves and their family presentable; and all quite irrespective of whether they feel ill, or expect an addition to the family."

Frau Winkmar stopped, and her glance travelled round the table from Frau Stoll, beaming and

proud in her old-fashioned blouse, recounting some of her paragons' sayings, to little Frau Henzel, who had never known youthful pleasures or pretty clothes, and who yet considered herself a most enviable person.

"But why should all the hardships devolve on the wife?" Patience asked.

Frau Winkmar shrugged her shoulders. "In existing conditions how can it be otherwise? You have no idea of the heroism of many of our women, just especially in our military class. They sacrifice everything for their husbands and families. The husband, as an officer, cannot do things cheaply and badly, cannot wear shabby uniforms and must, at all costs, keep up his prestige. So the wife cheerfully docks off every one of her own personal expenses—mends, patches, and contrives her own clothes, watches and thinks how she can save a penny here and do without something there. And in the worry and thought and hard work of all this she sacrifices her youth and her looks."

Frau Winkmar's low contralto voice had a peculiarly sympathetic timbre, and Patience turned to her with a sudden glow of admiration and feeling. She knew there was much unhappiness in this woman's own life, yet it had only widened her outlook instead of embittering her, and her thoughts seemed absorbed with the troubles and struggles of those around her.

"I so much enjoy talking with you," Patience exclaimed impulsively.

"You must often come and see me. I feel sure there are many things in your new life here which must appear difficult and strange. But I forgot

—of course you have our dear Frau Trenberg to help you.”

Patience looked across at her kind old friend, at her “Reform” dress, and her guileless beaming smile. She had a heart of gold, tender and sentimental, she was the most good, humble, and selfless creature imaginable, but the English girl somehow felt she could more easily confide in the woman sitting by her. Perhaps, always influenced by externals, she was attracted by the simple yet tasteful clothes, the carefully-dressed hair and the beautiful voice of the fat Captain’s wife. Or perhaps she unconsciously took Frau Trenberg at her own valuation, and did not credit her with those capacities of the mind which did not enter into the routine of life in the Lessingstrasse.

“Yes, there are plenty of things I find it difficult to understand,” Patience said. “The whole position of the women here seems so extraordinary. They do all the hard work and spend practically nothing on themselves, and instead of earning the men’s everlasting gratitude, they are looked down upon and considered to be doing nothing more than their duty.”

“And so they are,” Frau Winkmar said, “according to the ideas we have all been brought up on.”

“It is simply amazing,” Patience exclaimed vehemently, “that they don’t see the unfairness of it, that they merely seem thankful and contented that the men do them the honour of marrying them! I can’t understand that they haven’t been roused to rebellion long ago!”

“My dear child, if most of them heard you talk

like this, they would only think you had wild English ideas—you might succeed in making one or two young wives discontented, but, in our class and circumstances, no radical reform can be effected yet, I feel sure. Very few of the women in our circle have any weapons to fight with—they have been kept in subjection too long—and they and the men are so imbued with certain ideas and traditions, that it will take a long time to eradicate them.”

“You mean the idea that the man is a vastly superior creature, and that it is the duty of the woman to wait on him and subjugate herself to him in every way?”

“Well, perhaps that is put rather harshly,” Frau Winkmar smiled. “But I assure you, for the most part—though you will hardly believe it—our women are very happy. Remember, they have been brought up within their own narrow circle, with certain rigid ideas of what happiness, duty, and a girl’s life should be. When they obtain what they are taught is a woman’s highest bliss—a husband, children, and a house of their own—they are usually quite contented, even if their life would appear hard and unpleasant in your eyes. Do you not think the idea of happiness is very national? Certain things probably appal you here which we find quite right, and even those of us who are unhappy manage to get a great deal of pleasure out of existence.”

“I think happiness is often a question of ignorance,” Patience remarked. “We may imagine ourselves happy in a desert because we do not know of the existence of an oasis—the moment we have seen it, our so-called happiness is killed.”

“It is a great mistake,” Frau Winkmar said re-

flectively, "to cavil too much at the quality of our happiness. I think happiness often is making the best of unavoidable circumstances. Sometimes in trying forcibly to alter them, we only create fresh sorrow." She stopped, absent-mindedly chasing a crumb over her plate.

The conversation surged round them in an incessant wave of sound. Coffee had been handed round for the third time, and everybody was leaning back, flushed and animated.

"But surely it is a mistake to sit down meekly under things, and not try to better them?" Patience asked.

"If, with our short-sightedness, we can. For instance, in our military families, those of us who see the mistakes of our own upbringing, may wish to avoid them in our children, and may find that we have only succeeded in unfitting them for the lives they are forced to live."

There was something terribly sad in her voice, and Patience, swiftly piecing together all she had heard and seen, thought she understood. Frau Winkmar, her own talents, charms and accomplishments ignored and neglected, herself the household slave of a coarse, drink-sodden man, had determined that her daughter should have the advantages denied her mother. So Irmgard had been given more liberty and license, had been instructed in the art of making the most of her attractive appearance, had learnt to sing, to dance well, and to be smart—and what was the result? That she was a pretty, quick-tongued little coquette, whom the men flirted with, but did not venture to marry.

Both of them had been so absorbed in their con-

versation that they had hardly noticed their surroundings. Now Frau Mendl leant across and addressed Frau Winkmar.

"Have you heard Herr von Sassewitz is bringing his bride back next week?"

"Yes; I have been told she is very charming and tremendously rich."

"There is not much doubt about her riches," Frau Mendl exclaimed in her acrid voice. "Naturally, if one is the daughter of a fancy-goods manufacturer, one is likely to be an heiress. But that is not the class we want in the regiment. And I hear she is ignorant—no, quite disgracefully ignorant!"

Patience, listening to this criticism, conjured up the vision of an illiterate, ungrammatical vulgarian.

"Yes," Frau Stoll interrupted. "It appears she knows nothing about household duties—she actually has not got a notion of cooking, or preserving, or fine needlework!"

"A nice acquisition to the regiment!" Frau Mendl said grimly. "The type of woman who disgraces her sex!"

Patience reddened hotly. She felt as if each word was aimed at herself, for assuredly in Stelnitz, where nothing ever remained secret, everybody knew of her domestic ignorances and blunders.

The same thought evidently struck Frau Winkmar, for she said softly, "You must not be hurt at these remarks—of course they do not apply to you as a foreigner. But you see, the idea is so grafted in us that a woman who is not trained in household duties is lacking in the most important

feminine accomplishments, that we cannot help despising her. I suppose we condemn such ignorance as harshly as you condemn an ignorance of table manners."

This was another difficult pill to swallow! Patience had felt rather scornful of these women who converted themselves into household drudges, whose thoughts and conversation were full of domestic affairs, whose chief literature, she was convinced, consisted of their recipe-books. And now she found they despised her, that her ignorance reduced her to the relative level of eating peas with a knife! Assuredly her conceit had suffered a series of rough knocks, and she looked back ruefully at the arrogant visions she had conjured up of her conquest of this benighted little world. Her feelings of superiority were dashed; what right had she to look down upon these women because she had lived in luxury, and spent more money on her clothes than they had ever done?

"I think one difficulty is that Englishmen and Germans want quite different things from their wives," she said meditatively. "For instance, when our men come home in the evening, they like their wives to look attractive, to entertain them at dinner, and afterwards to sit together cosily talking by the fire, discussing things over their coffee, and feeling a real companionship for one another. Now here, the men consider it waste to wear any but one's shabbiest clothes at home, and they expect the wife to be running in and out of the kitchen the whole time, seeing to her husband's food. Firstly, this puts a stop to all real conversation, and secondly, from our point of view,

no decent man could remain sitting idly while the woman was jumping up and down attending to his wants."

She was thinking of the disputes with Helmuth over the pale mauve tea-gown she wore in the evenings. He considered it foolish and wasteful to wear such garments in the privacy of one's family; besides the fact that it was highly unpractical. And indeed the lace sleeves had already been baptized with some soup Marie had asked her to take off the stove, and the trailing mauve skirts bore traces of the kitchen, where she was always summoned two or three times during the evening. She was beginning to realize that, in the life she had chosen, cotton overalls would be more useful than tea-gowns, stout calico than cambric and laces, and thorough domestic capabilities than all the quickness of wit and tongue upon which she had set such store.

"You must not think that we housewives have no interests outside our kitchens," Frau Winkmar said with a smile. "We have plenty of talented women in the regiment. And then Irmgard and Ilse and Adelheid are all exceedingly musical, and used to have delightful evenings when they all performed."

"As young girls—but once they are married have they any time for that sort of thing?"

Frau Winkmar hesitated. "Of course so many new interests and occupations take up their time that they do drop their accomplishments frequently. Yes, it is quite true, once one is married, such things must go to the wall—that is if one has a family and not much means, as is the case

with most of us. It is terrible how one's entire day is filled up with different household duties. This afternoon, I very much wanted to read Dehmel's new book, but there was some goose-fat to be potted, and a lot of preserving of vegetables to be done, so of course the reading had to be given up."

"That seems such waste," Patience exclaimed. "You are forced to neglect your talents and your mind, in order to slave at things any servant could do."

"My dear, we come back to the starting point—the two nations have totally different ideals of what a woman should be. Nearly every German considers that household duties are the woman's proper vocation, and that she is infinitely better employed attending to them than in attempting to cultivate a mind, naturally inferior, with knowledge that could do no possible good."

"That seems such a narrow, extreme view! There is nothing I hate so much as the blue-stock-ing suffragette type of creature, who spends all her time over dead languages and philosophy, and allows her house and herself to be untidy and uncared for. But surely one could look after one's household efficiently without actually doing everything oneself? Couldn't the servants be taught to cook and work independently, and not expect their mistress to do most of it for them? I know some awfully poor families in England, who train their servant and manage without spending all their time in the kitchen."

Frau Winkmar shook her head. "Such an arrangement sounds delightful, but I am afraid you

would have to change both the mistresses and the servants here if you wished to attain it. Most German housewives like to do the things themselves, and are convinced they can't be properly done unless they attend to them personally, and of course the servants then never learn independence, and always expect their lady to help them in everything. Besides, we do save a good deal in this way."

Patience sighed. She was beginning to realize the amazing thrift practised round her. She felt convinced that a little clerk's family in a London suburb would waste and squander more in a week than these women, belonging to a privileged class, did in many months. But she could not help feeling that this rigid domestic economy was purchased at a very high price—that youth, health, talents, and mind were sacrificed upon its altar.

The ladies had all drawn out their needlework, and fingers and tongues were moving rapidly. Frau Mendl leant across the table. "How often are you going to have a wash-day, Frau Rabenstedt?" she inquired; then noting Patience's blank expression, she added, "I have one every quarter, and get a woman in to help iron, though my girl and I manage the washing ourselves. I could give you her address if you like. She's quite a good woman, if you keep a sharp eye on her, but she expects beer with her midday meal——"

They all plunged into the relative virtues and vices of different "ironing-women," and Frau Winkmar turned to Patience.

"It is the custom to keep all one's washing for a certain time, and then have a tremendous washing-day at home. As you see, some people have

it once in three months; I have mine every six weeks."

"But it seems such a horrid idea to keep dirty linen for such a long time!" Patience expostulated. "Why can't it be sent every week to a laundry?"

"My dear, think of the prices such places charge! Besides, they ruin the things."

"Then why not have a weekly washing-day at home?"

"Evidently you do not know the discomfort and work and upset of a household wash! It means you have to devote yourself to it the entire day, and give up everything else. You have to do all the cooking, as your girl cannot leave the wash-tub—no, I do not think you would care for a weekly repetition of that!"

Frau von Ehrich's loud voice sounded down the table. She had been telling some doubtful anecdote which apparently afforded her more amusement than it did anybody else, though there was a smile round Frau von Remmingen's lips, and one or two of the others thought it diplomatic to appear appreciative of the *Frau Oberstleutnant's* wit. Frau Trenberg looked pained and uncomfortable, but luckily the innuendoes and implications of most of the remarks, passed over her uncomprehended.

At last the beautiful ice-pudding arrived, and was handed round with glasses of sweet, heavy white wine. Voices grew louder, faces more flushed, confidences about husbands, children, and domestic affairs were freely interchanged.

Frau von Vorbach, Patience's other neighbour, was talking in undertones to her bosom-friend,

young Frau von Reck. "I simply hate their having a *Liebesmahl*—it always means they don't get home till heaven knows what time."

"And then they are very—well, let us say, hilarious!"

Both young women laughed rather ruefully, and Frau von Vorbach, whose husband belonged to an old, noble family, never out of debt from one generation to another, added:

"Yes, and then all the champagne they consume costs a good deal, even though the Colonel insists upon nothing but German brands being drunk."

"Well, I am sorry for poor Fräü Winkmar. I don't like to think of the condition he will be in when he gets home. He has only just returned from this institution which she pretended was a rest-cure, and here he is drinking like a fish already."

"Yes, and I believe one evening when he came home quite crazy, he locked her out of the flat for the whole night."

"It is not exactly an easy life for Frau Trenberg either, for though he does not drink, he has caused her a terrible lot of worry and unhappiness in other respects—in fact, at one time I believe it was thought he had deserted her with——"

Their voices sank even lower, and Patience turned her head away. She could not help overhearing their conversation, and she regarded the two women it had concerned with increased admiration. How pluckily and uncomplainingly they bore their husband's sins and offences! She wondered whether it was part of the code instilled into

German girls, that a husband has every right to be drunken and unfaithful?

These reflections filled her mind as at last the party broke up, and she found herself back in her flat. How thankful she ought to be that she possessed such a good husband—for, according to German ideas, he must assuredly be a paragon. And yet, the long confidential talk with Frau Winkmar had made her realize more acutely the absence of all mental intercourse and real companionship between Helmuth and herself. It was impossible to imagine his talking to her as this woman had done, and yet how much easier such interchange of ideas would make her life! De-nuded of all bonds of taste, sympathies, interests, and thought, her marriage appeared entirely physical and manual. He wanted her body to love and to work for him—the very existence of a mind or a brain he seemed to ignore. Then she thought of the remarks she had overheard concerning the orgy which was probably taking place at the officers' Casino. She had never seen anyone she knew personally the worse for drink, and she felt that the sight of her husband in such a condition would disgust and alienate her unspeakably.

She determined to go to bed, and try to sleep through his return; but though she at last slipped into unconsciousness, she woke with a start at the sound of heavy steps in the passage. There was much shuffling about, the clank of a sword dropped on the floor, then he stumbled into the room. She kept her eyes tightly shut, but she could hear him breathing heavily, knocking up against the furniture, then swearing softly to himself, and the thud

of his boots and clothes as he flung them off. The room seemed permeated with the smell of liquor and smoke, and suddenly he started humming with an uncertain and erratic lilt:

“ Love and shong, kisshes and wine-ine-ine ”

It was the refrain of the waltz which had appealed so strongly to her—the waltz they had sung on the first evening she met Helmuth, and which the band had played on the morning she finally decided to marry him. With its alluring cadences and its frivolous words, it had seemed to her then the embodiment of the gay, light-hearted life of the place. She had welcomed it as the triumphal farewell-song to her dreary, solemn, joyless existence at Colne House.

Now that she had seen below the surface, now that the scales had fallen from her eyes, she realized that she had only thrown down one pack to be burdened with another, far heavier, which could never be discarded. She also realized how misleading and superficial are those accounts of a foreign country written by girls who sojourn there for pleasure or convenience. In many cases, she felt convinced, they had escaped, as she had, from uncongenial surroundings and irksome duties. Freed from these, they could lead the life which best suited their inclinations, revelling in the music, the gaiety, and the attentions which fall to the lot of even the least attractive girl in a foreign community. She remembered her own sensations during her early days in Stelnitz; and she comprehended the ecstatic eulogies which certain of her

friends had written home to her about the fatherland. But their opinions were really worthless: they had only picked the sweets off the gaily-coloured cake, and they knew nothing of the unpalatable substance underneath. Severed from the easy life of an untrammelled and fêted guest, she had joined herself to the band of women whose life spells work, self-denial, and abnegation, without expectation of gratitude or recognition, who place an unswerving and uncritical submission at the feet of the one man whom they acknowledge as their lord and master. But in these women the instinct of subjugation to the male, of feminine inferiority, was born in their blood, and fostered by their whole upbringing; while she—she was desperately conscious of her own personality, self-centred and self-opinionated, hot-tempered and quick-tongued. How was she ever to bend her back to the load these women shouldered so uncomplainingly?

“Love and shong, kisshes and wine-ine-ine,” hic-coughed Rabenstedt as he flung himself into bed; and fear of the future seemed to close over Patience like a towering black wave.

CHAPTER VI

THE sun shone gaily in at the salon windows, and fell on Patience's hair as she knelt upon the floor, surrounded by parcels and packages. Her face was bright and animated, and she was calling directions to Paul, who was employed in opening some cases in the passage. Helmuth was away, and would not return till evening. The Colonel had ordered a number of the officers to meet him at Krolburg for a Staff ride, and so Patience had the field entirely to herself.

At last the things for which she had been waiting so eagerly had come—her books, china and pictures, and the other possessions which had adorned her sitting-room at Colne House. Paul had unpacked her Madeira long-chair, with a pile of large, soft cushions, one revolving and two folding book-cases, and was now engaged in unburying from their bed of shavings, her china, pottery, and all the various curios she had collected ever since she could remember. She stepped over a roll of oriental rugs, and advanced to the window, a pair of curtains of light flowered chintz over her arm. Her busy fingers had just made them, and the material from which they had been cut lay in a large bale on the ground.

"Paul," she cried, "please, the step-ladder, quick!"

The soldier-servant, with his honest peasant's face, was her admiring and devoted ally. She

liked his military quickness and precision, and his military obedience, unquestioning and instantaneous.

"*Zu Befehl gnädige Frau!*" came the reply, and the ladder was there and she climbing up it within the smallest possible space of time.

"Thank Heaven!" she exclaimed, as the strips of brown velvet and the numerous pairs of muffling lace curtains dropped to the ground and were replaced by the long folds of dainty chintz. "Now there is some light and air in the room! You can take all these things away," she added aloud, pointing to the débris on the floor, to the brown carpet with its splotches of magenta roses, and to the pile of wall decorations which she had ruthlessly pulled down. The Queen Luisa lay on her back, in company with the painted plates and a framed photograph of the Kaiser, while these fallen deities were shrouded in the crochet antimacassar and the plush-fringed table-cover.

"Are all of them to go, *gnädige Frau?*" Paul asked, looking with as much amazement as his military discipline permitted, at the banishment of his mistress's most beautiful possessions.

"All," she replied impatiently. "They can be piled up for the present in the work-room. Put all the books and ornaments you have unpacked in this corner, and tell Marie I only want some cold meat for dinner, and that I am on no account to be disturbed."

Paul clicked his heels together, and with his invariable "*Zu Befehl gnädige Frau,*" disappeared.

Patience worked on with inexhaustible enthusiasm and energy, and within a few hours the trans-

formation effected was certainly striking. The drab-coloured doors into the bedroom were blocked up and hidden by Japanese embroidered curtains of a deep peacock-blue; two book-cases stood against the wall, and above them a line of engravings, in plain black frames, distracted attention from the ugly background. She had dragged the long-chair to the window, where it stood jutting out into the bow, and near it the round table, ousted from its commanding position in the centre of the room, had veiled its stiffness in a green cover with a border of pomegranates and leaves.

So far the work had been comparatively simple. She had hung so many pictures in her life, that to get the accurate eye-line was easy enough, and the task of arranging her books, and grouping pottery and china in the most effective manner, was one of sheer pleasure. Now, however, she was confronted by the stiff brown velvet suite, and she gazed rather apprehensively from it to the bale of chintz. Well, she must be bold, and so far her efforts had been crowned with brilliant success. She knelt down on the bright yet mellow arabesques of the rugs which now supplanted the crude square of carpet, and measured, fitted and pinned the fresh shining material on to the unpromising pieces of furniture. It was by no means an easy task, and Patience's respect increased for those people who make covers for sofas and chairs. She felt convinced it would be easier to fit the stoutest figure with a ball-gown, than this straight-backed, uncomfortable sofa with a proper covering. It seemed all corners and angles, and she found the material bagged in one direction and

pulled in the other. However, her fingers were quick and deft, and though her work was only temporarily pinned, the effect was certainly excellent. In fact, the brown velvet suite was not recognizable in its light, flowered clothing, and she felt that another day's work would complete the transformation of a room which had seemed to her, at first, hopelessly ugly and dreary. Yes, this would be her domain, her sanctuary, where she could read and work and rest. The wicker sofa with its piled, soft cushions, looked delightfully inviting, and near it on the table, were some books and magazines, her leather writing-case, and a green bowl full of violets. It was amazing how habitable and cosy it already looked: light and airy and twice its former size. Even the white china stove was less of an eyesore, its shelf beautified with a blue Indian idol, two tall green jars, and several plates of rough pottery of a beautiful orange colour. Patience stepped back to see the effect, then added a photograph in a heavy silver frame. It was of Mrs. Thaile in a plain, sweeping, evening-gown, such as she always affected, standing with her hands on the back of a tall chair, her head turned slightly, the light striking her profile and the coils of her fair hair. She seemed to Patience extraordinarily young, graceful, and attractive. Though she had a selfish and cruel husband, his unkindness was of a totally different type from that of the husbands here. He tortured her mind, but he recognized that she possessed one; he thwarted her wishes, but he valued her opinion; he imprisoned her body, but he surrounded it with beauty and ease. This must account for the fact, Patience

thought, that despite all the worry, unhappiness, and disappointments of her life, Mrs. Thaile had remained fresh and young-looking, while the women here often lost their complexions, their figures, and all care for their personal appearance, before they were half her age.

And suddenly a tremendous longing for her mother swept over the girl. She was convinced that now, if they were together, they would feel an understanding and confidence and sympathy with one another such as had never been possible before. She herself had gone through so much; she was learning the meaning of compromise and tolerance, she had tasted the bitter waters of humiliation and defeat, and was beginning to realize that in the ruthless chase after pleasure, we frequently lose our happiness. If only she could tell her mother everything—if she could convince her of the love, the regrets, and the awakened comprehension with which her heart was full.

Suddenly the postman's knock sounded on the door, and Paul's heavy step as he hurried through the passage.

"A letter for *gnädige Frau*, and would *gnädige Frau* like the gas lit? It is getting very dark."

Patience nodded as she took the envelope in her hand, and the light flaring up, revealed the neat caligraphy of Miss Cordelia Duff. Of course, in writing to her aunt, she had never breathed a word of disappointment or regrets; she painted in glowing colours the life she had fought for so obstinately, she spoke in enthusiastic terms of everybody's kindness to her, she had even given a humorous little account of one of her culinary fail-

ures, and of Helmuth's merry, good-natured encouragement—how he even went so far as to swallow some of the burnt rock-like mass, and swear that it tasted quite nice. Such a charming domestic little scene must touch Aunt Cordelia's spinster heart and hide from her sharp old eyes any inkling of the fact that her niece was realizing the blunder she had prophesied.

Sinking on to the wicker sofa, Patience at last opened the envelope and read:

DEAREST PATIENCE,

It is indeed a relief to have such enthusiastic accounts from you, and I only wish I had good news in return. However, I cannot be sufficiently thankful that you are happily married. As you know, I was doubtful as to how the venture would turn out. Apart from my feeling against the advisability of marrying out of one's nation, I know how unhappy marriages run in families. I have frequently seen that when the parents are not suited to one another, all their children manage to make matrimonial mistakes, instead of taking warning from their parents' unfortunate experience. It is almost as if the luck of securing the right husband ran in some families and was absent in others. You will understand how relieved I am that with you this has not been the case, especially as I assisted you to attain your desires. And now I am afraid I have some bad news to tell you. Your father has been particularly difficult and trying ever since the summer. Somewhere, I presume, he possesses a heart and a conscience, and these, I imagine, have been troubling him since the complete estrangement between you and your par-

ents upon which he has insisted. No father can cut off his child—even if the child be in the wrong—without suffering in some manner, and apparently Mr. Thaile, to drown his feelings, had a worse attack of his buying mania. He purchased the most expensive and useless antiquities, and spent far more money than he possessed. Then, in a panic, he speculated—involved himself heavily in some rubber company, which he had been told would make his fortune, and of course, after the manner of such things, the whole affair collapsed, and with it went every penny he had invested. Colne House is to be sold, and everything in it, and as your father cannot face living in a small way in England, Aunt Charlotte, who has been travelling with her husband in the Colonies, is using her influence to get him a post in the Melbourne Museum. Your mother has behaved splendidly throughout. She tells me she tried to effect a reconciliation with you before they leave Europe, for who knows how long? But trouble has only made him still harder, and I should imagine he is tortured by the belief that you are triumphing over his misfortunes. Your mother may not write to you, but of course she gets all your news through me, and she begs me to tell you how thankful and overjoyed she is that your marriage has proved so entirely happy and satisfactory.

With love to yourself and Helmuth, and many greetings to that good and charming Frau Trenberg,

Believe me,

Your affectionate aunt,

CORDELIA DUFF.

P. S.—I hope the Cunningham Ropers will buy

the property as it adjoins their land. You have no idea, in the present state of affairs, how difficult it is to find purchasers for landed property.

So that was the final death-blow to all hopes of a reconciliation between herself and her parents! Until this moment, Patience had never fully realized how much she had counted upon an ultimate truce—upon a mutual burying of the hatchet which would enable her to see her mother and forge those missing links of confidence and sympathy, now so bitterly regretted.

She had pictured to herself Mrs. Thaile's first visit to her. How proud she would be to show the regiment and Stelnitz her refined, dainty, young-looking mother, what a snub it would be to Frau von Ehrich who had declared her parents must be common and unpresentable, what a triumph and pleasure to have her mother under her own roof, to meet her on a new footing of affectionate understanding and sympathetic equality! She could no longer be regarded as the child who had never grown up: now that she was married and independent, all causes of friction were removed, and they could have associated on terms of genuine friendship. And now alas! with one violent blow, all this structure of hope and anticipation had been levelled to the ground. Not only had all chance of a reconciliation vanished, but she would probably never see her mother again. She experienced a taste of the irrevocableness of death; and then all personal feelings were swamped in distress at the realization of what this *débâcle* would mean to the delicately nurtured, fastidious Mrs. Thaile. To face pov-

erty and hardship with a man she loved, would have been hard enough to a woman of her age, but to launch out on a new life in a new world, a life of work and struggle, separated from all friends and associations, with a selfish, embittered tyrant—the mere thought of such a fate made Patience wince with pain. And then the postscript to her aunt's letter flashed across her mind: to think that they were pinning their hopes upon the Cunningham Ropers' purchase of Colne House! Perhaps, if she had not been carried away by her emotional instability, by her inherent disbelief in difficulties righting themselves except by immediate and violent action, she might now be in a position to help her parents in the most effectual manner. And what sheer delight that would have been! Everything that was best in her and everything that was worst sang at the mere thought of it. It would have been the most brilliant amends, the most dramatic triumph, the most gratifying revenge. She would have been her father's benefactor, and, for her mother's sake, she would have consented to forgive him his treatment of her in the past——

"Fool that I was!" she thought to herself. "If only I had realized that one's bitterest regrets are not for the pleasures one has missed, but for the blundering errors one has committed."

She was aroused by the sounds of steps in the passage, and the clank of a sword. Pulling herself hastily together, she moved to the window, drew the chintz curtains across, then tidied her hair before a small Venetian mirror, and picked up a magazine. She had made up her mind not to mention Miss Duff's letter to Helmuth, in any case

for the present. It could do no good, and she felt too sore to tolerate the type of condolence and commiseration such news would probably evoke. Besides, she had a lurking apprehension that he might show annoyance or resentment. From various remarks he had let fall, she had gathered that he was firmly confident Mr. Thaile would soon gather them to his arms, and endow his daughter and his delectable son-in-law with half his possessions. It was a difficult thing for Helmuth to believe that a man in Mr. Thaile's position, could remain alienated from such a desirable acquisition to his family as an officer in the German Army.

She heard voices outside; Paul was telling him that the *gnädige Frau* was in the salon, then the door opened, and her husband appeared on the threshold. For one moment he remained speechless, his eyes travelling round the room, transformed beyond all recognition, then he burst out:

"What the devil is all this? What in the name of heaven have you done to the salon?"

She leant back against the soft green cushions, and lifted first one foot and then the other on to the long-chair. "I told you I was going to rearrange some of my possessions," she said sweetly, "and now that my things have arrived from England, I determined to lose no time in making this room habitable."

"Habitable!" he exclaimed. "A salon has no business to be habitable. It is the room of ceremony, where one receives one's visitors."

He advanced a few steps, and his gaze wandered with increasing disgust from one thing to another, until it finally remained rivetted upon the

chintz-covered sofa, denuded of its imposing stiffness and of the attendant table which always barricades the German seat of honour, as if to make it more unapproachable and exclusive.

"What have you done to the furniture?" he demanded. "Do you mean to say you have actually covered up the fine brown velvet with that cheap, common stuff? Were you perhaps afraid it might get spoilt?"

Patience burst into peals of laughter. "Don't be so humorous, Helmuth! I am afraid I was in no way anxious for the preservation of the brown velvet—the one thing I wanted was to hide its hideousness."

Rabenstedt was examining the flowered chintz. "And so you cover it with *this!*" he exclaimed, a world of contempt in his voice, "this cheap cotton stuff that we would not have even in a bedroom! And curtains of it, too, instead of the velvet and lace! Why, you must be mad!"

"You surely are not going to set yourself up as an authority on taste?" she asked scornfully. "You have several times told me that you don't notice the difference between one room and another."

"No, but I know when a room is all right, or when it offends against every rule of correctness and accepted standards. Why, I have never seen a room like this before"—he was wandering angrily about—"no table in the centre, and the chairs standing around anyhow, and as for this"—he planted himself in front of the Madeira chaise-longue on which Patience was extended—"I never heard of such a thing in a salon! Common bas-

ket-work, not even upholstered, and a most incorrect lounging affair which you could never even use in public!"

She allowed him to continue pouring out his annoyance, not troubling to interrupt, but watching him icily through half-closed lids.

"And all this litter of books and papers and writing materials! Why, such things are not fit for a salon, they should be kept tidily put away in the sitting-room."

He flung himself on one of the disfigured chairs and stared gloomily in front of him. "And that hideous low line of pictures," he continued. "As you think you know so much about taste, I am surprised you hang them in such an ugly, stiff way. And by-the-bye," he added sharply, "where are the pictures of Queen Luisa and the Kaiser?"

"I have taken them down, as I do not care for them," she said steadily. "This is going to be my room, where I shall sit and work and receive my friends. You can do as you like with the *Wohnzimmer*, and hang the Kaiser and anybody else you fancy there."

"Do you suppose I, as a German officer, can see such disrespect and contempt shown to my sovereign? Pulling down his picture and chucking it on the rubbish-heap! I do not think I am intolerant or unkind, but I really must beg of you to give up your strange taste and ideas, and adopt those of the country to which you now belong. You know I am easy-going and good-natured, but I cannot allow anything which is a disparagement to my nation, or a danger to my prestige. I assure you, I should be literally ashamed for the

regiment to see this room, and I must ask you to put everything back as it was before, and we will find some suitable places for your things."

"I am sorry, but I must point-blank decline to do this." She was sitting up now and she spoke in quite a calm, low voice, but there was a note of obstinate determination in it which struck even Helmut. "I have given way in everything so far, but I wish you to understand this is the limit. In an establishment paid for and furnished by me, I consider it is not too much to take one room for myself to arrange as I like. Your nation is, of course, superior in most ways, but I have heard and seen the English home and the English houses quoted constantly in Germany for their beauty and taste, and I can assure you a little shop-keeper in England wouldn't own such a hideous drawing-room as this used to be."

There was so much cool contempt and dispassionate resolution in her expression, that Rabenstedt hesitated. If this had been an ordinary feminine outburst of hysterical complaints and emotionally-tearful outpourings, he would have known how to cope with it, but before this self-possessed and frigid argument he felt singularly irresolute.

"Well, this sort of thing may be all right in England," he said rather weakly, "but I assure you it won't do here."

"Why not?" she asked politely. "I daresay the shock of seeing a really tasteful salon may be overpowering to begin with, but afterwards I guarantee that outraged feelings will calm down, and we shall have all the Stelnitz ladies covering their furniture with their summer dresses."

She laughed lightly and picked up a book as if to show that the conversation was ended, but Hel-muth still fidgeted irresolutely, beating a hasty tattoo on the table. Not only did she seem to have got her own way, but she had managed to make him feel foolish and ignorant in the process. This was undoubtedly quite unpermissible; he must at once reassert his authority over her, put her in the wrong, and afterwards he would forgive her, and let her fill the salon with rubbish if her heart was set upon it. Besides, he had a sneaking respect for English taste, and the dainty refinement with which English people seemed to surround themselves. However much he had heard "perfidious Albion," her policy, tactics, and sentiments abused and the desire expressed to humble her in the dust, he had also noticed how much she was quoted and aped in certain directions. The smartest officers always affected an English tailor, and interspersed their conversation with English expressions—"tip-top," "high-life," "tailor-made," "gentleman;" while their horses and dogs had English names, and genuine or pretended English pedigrees. Even in the shops, materials, gloves, ties and hats were labelled "Genuine English," "English fashion," as the greatest possible attraction, though they were probably of cheap German manufacture.

Perhaps, after all, this new-fangled, unimposing salon might not make them appear ridiculous, but, as a typical English drawing-room of high-life, it might create quite an admiring sensation in Stel-nitz.

Still, he must naturally not say this at once, or Patience might think her arguments and determi-

nation had convinced him. He looked hurriedly round the room for some peg on which he could hang a complaint, and his eye alighted upon the remains of the bale of chintz from which the covers had been cut.

"Where did you get that?" he demanded.

"I ordered it from England," she replied without laying down her book.

"And spent money on it, I suppose? Even though that cotton stuff is worth practically nothing, it must have cost a nice amount getting all that quantity out. And such absolute waste! If we were rich, it would be a silly way of squandering our money, but as it is, it is worse than silly. Here you have a thoroughly nice household equipment on which nothing ought to be spent for many years—why, the Trenbergs have never had their suite recovered since they were married."

She threw down her book, and confronted him now, her face flushed, her eyes fixing him steadily. "Of all matrimonial disputes, those about money are among the most sordid, and I refuse to wrangle and argue. But I cannot allow your last statement to pass unchallenged, and I would say once for all that on this subject you have no right whatever to dictate. A man who goes to the household cash-box—supplied by the wife—and extracts fifty marks here and fifty marks there, presumedly to squander on champagne and other little extravagances, ought to avoid the monetary question and be thankful if his wife does so also. I understand now all this preaching about economy and simplicity—the wives are to scrape and save so that the men may have the extra marks to spend on their

own entertainment. The Colonel rails if the women are so extravagant as to allow themselves a new dress occasionally, but the men may celebrate their birthdays by drinking as much champagne as they can hold."

He fell back, struck by the biting contempt of her words, unwillingly impressed by her unwavering attitude, her fearless attack upon himself. He was too unaccustomed to such weapons wielded in feminine hands to attempt a counter-attack; his wits were not nimble enough to get the better of hers, and his good-nature prevented him from resorting to brutality as he knew many men would have done.

"I am too kind-hearted," he thought to himself, and set to veiling his defeat in suddenly-assumed jocularly.

"What a little spit-fire! *Herr Gott!* I believe every curl on its little head is standing on end! Come, come, heartsleaf, calm thyself. Thy husband was only trying to save thee from the jeers and amusement thy strange salon will cause. But, of course, if it means so much to thee, thy foolish, indulgent husband will make the best of it!"

He crossed over and slipped his arm round her waist. "Am I not to be rewarded with a kiss, even if I swear I think all thy litter charming?"

He drew her closer, but she held herself from him, stemming both hands against the front of his uniform.

"Still angry?" he demanded with a laugh. "It is rather a joke that we should quarrel over the arrangement of a room, when as a rule I don't know or care what the furniture or decorations are like

of any of the places I am in. As far as I am concerned, you might have your suite covered with sacking if you liked. In speaking as I did, I was only impelled by the desire to save you from other people's opinions and comments."

"I felt quite sure you were actuated by purely altruistic motives," she said with a dry little laugh, though she did not withhold her lips any longer.

After many defeats, she had at last scored a victory. Not only was her domain now unconditionally hers, but the attempted onslaught upon it had been repulsed with a volley of home-truths, eliciting no counter-attack.

Perhaps, after all, she would be strong enough to fight against circumstances?

CHAPTER VII

PATIENCE had been too much occupied with her own affairs, too much absorbed in the gradual unfolding of her new life, in the realization of its unexpected difficulties and differences, to see much of the young Frau von Predow. When they did meet, there was a note of restraint in their intercourse, the old friendship and confidence seemed to have suffered some rebuff. Perhaps Adelheid feared the English girl's critical eye and tongue, perhaps she instinctively felt a condemnation of her Diedrich, which she loyally resented. Though Predow was away from home a good deal, and left his young wife to work and battle through her difficult time without his help and sympathy, her admiring love had suffered no diminution. She felt neither bitter nor aggrieved at his neglect: she was nervous and depressed and unattractive now, so how could she expect him to spend his time cooped up with her, when he might be enjoying himself elsewhere? All the same, it relieved and soothed her to talk with some one like her mother, who strengthened her in these views, and told her that all men were the same—it was a question not of individual, but of sex idiosyncrasy. Men were created with certain instincts and desires, and it was therefore the woman's duty to make the best of the fact. Thus Adelheid preserved her belief in Diedrich's love, and her admiring respect for him;

and so she also retained her happiness and her guileless, innocent mind. But Patience, she apprehended, held very different views on this subject, and in her presence Adelheid always felt on the defensive, as if she must vindicate her husband and her country from some subtly implied criticism.

One afternoon, however, Patience asked Frau Trenberg and her daughter to come to tea with her. Helmuth would be on duty, so they could have an undisturbed chat together. They found her in the transfigured salon, stretched on the long-chair, a tea-tray by her side, laden with silver, thin blue china, and a brass kettle boiling on a spirit-lamp. Neither woman could repress an exclamation of surprise at this novel and astonishing sight.

"*Herzchen*, what hast thou done to thy salon?" Frau Trenberg cried breathlessly.

Patience put both her arms round the kind old shoulders. "Please do not be hurt that I have altered the arrangement, but I could not help feeling rather home-sick, and I wanted to make one room look as much as possible like the drawing-room in my old home. Helmuth has given over this room quite to me to use as we do our English salons, and it has already made so much difference to me. You do understand, don't you, and you are not offended or angry with me?"

Patience could be very ingratiating and sweet when she wished, and the *Frau Major* had never harboured resentment against anybody in her life, much less against those she loved.

"Of course, if you prefer it so, *Herzchen*," she

said rather doubtfully, "and if it gives you pleasure I am very glad."

But she made rather a mournful tour of inspection, murmuring at intervals, "It does seem a pity for the beautiful velvet suite! And those fine painted plates—*Du lieber Zeit!* these are quite rough pottery one could buy for a few pfennigs—And instead of that fine fringed table-cover, which I thought thou wouldst like so much, this plain green one—so much green everywhere, and we consider green such an unpleasant colour! And all those expensive lace curtains gone—why I got them for a bargain at Müller's sale, and then paid sixty-four marks for them—and instead cheap cotton curtains—one would not even see them in a bedroom! No, *Herzchen*, thou canst not really admire them more?"

"Indeed I do," Patience replied with a laugh, "And to save endless repetition to all the amazed and horrified people who call, you might tell everybody that I have arranged my salon according to English taste; that England is recognized as the authority on house decoration, and that with us people with the highest pedigree and the longest purse, cover their furniture with this despised material."

Then Patience gave her visitors tea which she had brewed herself, and which tasted quite different from the straw-coloured beverage Stelnitz dignified by the name. And she teased them and laughed at them because they found it so disconcerting not to sit round a table, and were quite nonplussed at having to balance the egg-shell cups and the wafery bread-and-butter cut by Patience herself.

They were a most gay, merry little party, and the *Frau Major* quite forgot any pain and disappointment she had felt at Patience's revolutionary measures. In fact, when the curtains were drawn across the windows, and the shaded reading-lamp—one of Patience's extravagances—stood on the table among the magazines and books, she confessed that the room did look very comfortable and cosy indeed.

Certainly she carried out Patience's instructions with the utmost dispatch: everybody was informed that the young Frau Rabenstedt's salon was modelled on those of English "Milords," that it was "highly-modern," and quite the correct thing in English "High-Life." And so Patience's visitors, instead of turning up their noses and being exceedingly contemptuous, pretended great delight and admiration. Those who owned maroon velvet suites, explained that of course they did not admire them, but as they were the fashion when their equipment was bought, they had to make the best of them; while the more ambitious, who boasted distorted furniture, and the twisted contortions of modern Munich art, declared such simplicity charming, but that in Germany they now admired more originality and style.

Patience gave tea parties, attended by many of the *Leutnants* as well as the ladies of the regiment. They consumed her excellent tea, thinnest bread-and-butter, and dainty little sandwiches, which, though very good, they found an inadequate substitute for the piled-up plates of cakes to which they were accustomed. However, it was all very novel and amusing. The sofa—no longer awe-

inspiring in its flowery garment—was considered no particular seat of honour: a young *Leutnant* might as well sit upon it as the most important lady present, and it was most strange to be perched on chairs dotted higgledy-piggledy over the room, instead of being planted immovably round a table. Endless laughter and jokes were caused by the difficulty of manipulating cups and saucers and edibles. Fat *Leutnant* Brehm struggling to his feet for some cake, spilt the tea and only just saved *Patience's* blue china from destruction.

"It is too much responsibility for me, *gnädige Frau*," he said, wiping his forehead. "Hippopotamuses cannot be expected to feed out of the hand!"

Patience's teas, in fact, became quite an institution. The young officers knew they would generally find her in at that time, looking thoroughly attractive in a pretty gown, her daintily-shod feet extended on the wicker-chair, the kettle singing on the tea-tray. They were always most attentive, gay and talkative, and hardly a day passed when the chintz-covered chairs were not occupied by some uniform or another. Their manner towards *Patience* had changed from the frankly-flirtatious to the respectfully-admiring, and they welcomed her entry into the regiment with the greatest apparent enthusiasm. Amongst themselves, they often said they would not care to manage such an original, unconventional wife, but as somebody else's wife, they thoroughly enjoyed the refreshing change from the hackneyed garrison life which *Patience* and her little teas provided.

She herself managed to extract quite a lot of amusement from these entertainments, and she fre-

quently reflected that it was at least a fortunate thing for her that she was not married to a German civilian. From what she had seen, existence as the wife of a doctor, a lawyer or an official, was equally restricted, conventional and etiquette-ridden, while the drudgery and sordidness were far more noticeable, stripped of the glamour, the prestige and privileges of the German military. Also, judging from her personal experience, the officers boasted the largest share of national courtesy and manners. They allowed the women to wait on them, but they kissed their hands, and were socially most agreeable to them; they did not have a daily tub, but they appeared spruce and immaculate; they brushed their hair and moustaches in public, but they neither picked their teeth nor expectorated, and all these sins of omission and commission Patience had remarked in the German civilians she had encountered. She thought of the community at the Schöналb Kurhaus—of the *Frau Doktor* and the *Frau Direktor*, with their dirty hands and their obviously neglected persons, of their husbands' soiled collars, unspeakable table-manners, and rude allusions to herself and her nationality. This last annoyance she had been spared in Stelnitz; whatever might have been said behind her back, hitherto no remark derogatory to her country had been ventured upon in her presence, and with the exception of the Colonel, everyone had received her with an appearance of much friendliness.

But the Colonel's animosity was to be brought very forcibly to her notice. One morning when she happened not to be in the kitchen, but on her long-

chair, writing letters, Paul brought in the *Frau Oberst's* card. Patience suppressed an exclamation of annoyance, and was of course, in duty bound, compelled to receive her Colonel's wife.

Frau Brander came in, looking more awkward and uncomfortable than usual. She shook hands nervously, and her eyes searched involuntarily for the sofa—the seat of honour to which she was always ceremoniously conducted. Patience, however, ignorantly pulled forward an arm chair for her visitor, and perched herself among the cushions of the *chaise longue*.

Evidently the *Frau Oberst* had something on her mind and did not in the least know how to disburden herself of it. She attempted one or two fragmentary commonplaces, then hesitated and gazed vaguely round the room as if searching for help there. The unconventionality and strangeness of her surroundings, however, appeared to bewilder her even more, and she looked so worried and unhappy, that Patience felt quite sorry for her. She was obviously a nervous and reserved woman, whose very shyness made her sometimes appear brusque. Patience guessed that she was kind-hearted, but entirely under the thumb of her pompous and narrow-minded husband.

She cleared her throat. "Of course, Frau Rabenstedt, it is very difficult for you, as a foreigner coming into the regiment, to understand our customs and etiquette, and I hope you will not mind if I, as the Colonel's wife, and an elder woman, point out one or two things to you."

She looked across rather apprehensively, but as Patience made no sign, she continued, "For in-

stance, these teas which you are continually giving—they are doubtless very nice, and I can see that they must be a great institution in England, but they do not do here—they are not suitable to our surroundings. One of the things the *Oberst* is most anxious about is to keep all foreign habits and customs out of the regiment, to maintain a strictly German tone throughout. This upholding of German traditions, and the strict expulsion of all foreign elements, is recognized in the most exalted quarters as absolutely necessary for the maintenance of our high patriotic military standard. The Kaiser, as perhaps you know, has done away with all the French terms we formerly used in the Army and has substituted German ones, and he has expressed his august wish that everything in his Army should be German to the core."

Another pause. She was obviously reciting, most unwillingly, a speech drummed into her by her husband. Patience was sorry for her, battling with such an unpleasant task, but she was too infuriated with the Colonel to come to her assistance.

"May I ask, *gnädige Frau*," she said politely, "whether the fact of a few friends drinking some cups of my tea, lowers the tone of the regiment?"

"Of course not, my dear Frau Rabenstedt," Frau Brander said hurriedly. "Only it is not the custom to have these informal tea-parties whenever anybody likes to come. We have our regular 'coffee-parties' for the ladies, and if one cares to invite some of the gentlemen now and then to a glass of beer and a sandwich in the evening, it is very nice. You must not think we find any harm in your customs; it is only that the *Oberst* must be very

careful to prevent outlandish and unnational things creeping into the regiment. We should all be very grateful if you could conform to our habits and ideas and ways of living, which I am sure, after a little time, you will learn to love and respect. It is the duty of each one of us to help maintain the high-minded simplicity, the strict economy, and cheerful domesticity which are the back-bone of our life. Several of our young officers have married wives out of the rich business class, and these are the people who introduce a pernicious element of extravagance into our contented, plain mode of living. They wear exaggerated, unsuitable clothes, go in for all kinds of new-fangled things, and by their example lead many of the others astray. It may seem very unfair to you that you should not wear your fine clothes and conduct your house in the manner to which you are accustomed, but you must remember that we cannot consider our individual pleasure, but must sacrifice ourselves for the good of the whole glorious community to which we have the honour to belong. The regiment is a family for which the *Oberst* is responsible. He must keep a strict eye on its welfare, and, above all, use every means in his power to quell the growing tendency to extravagance and luxury creeping in everywhere. We see with sorrow how this expensive pretentiousness is everywhere ousting the fine old German economy and simplicity, to which indeed we owe much of the greatness of our nation. However, up till now, a large section of our Army has remained true to the old ideals, and it rests with each one of us to help maintain its high standard."

She stopped breathlessly, and Patience, glancing

across, quite expected to see her consulting the Colonel's notes. "Poor woman," she thought, "how she must have hated the job!"

Realization of her guest's discomfort made her less resentful than she would otherwise have been. After all, it would be very unfair to vent her wrath on this woman for doing her husband's dirty work. And so a sense of fairness rather than of diplomacy prompted her to reply amiably to this tirade, which, a few months previously, would have evoked nothing but her sarcasm and ire.

"I am sorry if I have been lacking in consideration and tact," she said. "It is very difficult for a foreigner to realize certain things—we have such totally different standards."

A pleasant smile lit up Frau Brander's plain features. "I know," she said rising to her feet, "and I hope you will not think me very unpleasant and fault-finding. I am sure that in a short time you will have got quite used to our life and ways, and will feel quite happy as a member of our dear regiment."

After the *Frau Oberst* had left, Patience's indignation and disgust swamped all the calmer, more tolerant feelings which pity for the poor woman's nervous discomfort had awakened in her. After all, it was an unheard-of piece of impertinence to be dictated to like this, to be told what one should wear, and what one should not do! It seemed to Patience that the whole of Stelnitz poked its nose into other people's affairs, and this was regarded so much as a matter of course that to show resentment appeared entirely futile. The old retired Captain and his wife, who occupied the flat below,

displayed an unflagging and whole-hearted interest in the Rabenstedt *ménage*, worthy of a better object. Frau von Kranau, in her drab-coloured bed-jacket, would waylay Marie on the back stairs, and make searching inquiries as to what her *Herrschaften* were having for dinner. Were they not eating that duck which she had seen hanging outside? Surely it was high time? What stuffing would be used? And what pudding was Frau Rabenstedt making? Then she and her husband would pounce upon Patience herself as she was going out or returning, and would make her come into their hot sitting-room, where the process of "pumping" would continue. "We saw you going out last night—who had a party? What did they have to eat? Was the ice from Klinsky? Did they have four courses? Are you going to the Stolls' to-morrow? There you will only have the ordinary supper with the necessary three courses—the Stolls cannot afford more—Yes, the *Kommiss Pekkos* begin now, you will have plenty of dinners and suppers."

"Yes, yes," the fat old Captain sighed, folding his hands over his protruding corporation, "that is the sad thing of being on the shelf—one is passed over in the invitations."

"And how is your Marie getting on? Do you not find her wasteful?" The equally fat spouse of the Captain would eye Patience searchingly. "I saw when your dustbin was being emptied several good pieces of bread and quite a lot of cauliflower stalks—these should all be put in the soup for the kitchen. And a scatter-brained creature she seems, too. My Luise saw her last evening after dark, flirting with some soldier in the courtyard——"

"Ah, these girls, these girls!" the Captain would exclaim. A life of idleness had robbed him of his last vestige of manhood, and he was now almost as interested in servants and gossip as any of the old women. "But how is our dear Frau Rabenstedt getting on? Still the two turtle-doves billing and cooing, I suppose? When am I going to be asked to act as godfather?" And the fat old Captain would wink facetiously, and press a loud moist kiss on Patience's hand as she hurried away.

On the day of the *Frau Oberst's* visit, Patience seemed fated to suffer from a special dose of Stelnitz's thirst for information. She had not thought it necessary to mention Frau Brander's lecture in speaking to her husband. After all, she knew exactly the comments he would make upon it—"There, wife, I told you so! That comes of your insisting upon all these extravagant and unusual things. Of course the Colonel is thoroughly annoyed with you, and if I do not get my captaincy as soon as I expected, I shall understand why," etc., etc. Knowing all this beforehand, there was no object in evoking a repetition, especially as they were invited out that evening, and it would be a pity to start with ruffled tempers and feelings.

Indeed an epidemic of regimental dinners and suppers was descending upon them. The more ambitious gave "dinners," which began at five o'clock and included four or five courses and frequently champagne, while the less opulent contented themselves with a "supper," commencing at eight, and consisting of the usual three courses, washed down by inexpensive red and white wines. There was,

of necessity, as little variation in the company as in the food, and as the couples were divided up and apportioned strictly according to rank, it frequently happened that the same pair went in together evening after evening.

"I am sick of the very sight of that cross-grained Frau Mendl and her biscuit-coloured dress!" Major Trenberg once told Patience. "I have taken her in seven times this winter, and she is the most uninteresting woman I know and talks the whole time!"

On this particular evening, Helmuth studying the plan of the table pinned up in the passage, informed his wife that Oberleutnant von Vorbach had fallen to her share.

"Thou wilt be in a highly-noble corner, mouse," he said jocularly. "The Herr Baron von Remmingen is sitting on thy other side, so I hope thou wilt be properly impressed."

The guests were standing around in Frau Mendl's salon, and as each fresh couple arrived, there was a great clicking of heels, kissing of hands, and general greeting of one another. The officers moved about from one lady to another, bestowing graceful and appropriate remarks with their usual fluent ease. The ladies were attired in high dresses of very various designs and periods, but those which were lacking in fashion made up for it in trimming, it being, in fact, the habit to renovate old costumes with odd pieces of ribbon and lace, which, the owners fondly believed, rendered them unrecognizable to the rest of the community. "Papa must have a new *Litewka*," Frau Stoll would say. "So there is another sixty marks gone, and instead of getting

that beautiful blue silk, I must put a jet fringe and a lace bow on my old brown broché and make that do." As for Frau Trenberg—she would have rather made herself a dinner-dress out of a disused table-cloth, than spend any money on herself. Frau von Remmingen was, of course, astoundingly fashionable, and looked like a cheap chocolate-box which had been tied up too tightly; while Frau von Vorbach, who had no family and could therefore be artistic, had painted her white satin wedding-dress with large bunches of hectic roses.

Everybody stood stiffly in a semi-circle, their eyes wandering furtively to the folding-doors, which were eventually thrown open by the soldier-servant, disclosing the usual long table dotted over with the usual numerous bottles of wine. The gentlemen offered their arms, and they marched in solemnly—of course strictly according to precedence.

"How was it *gnädige Frau* ever came to Stelnitz?" Herr von Vorbach inquired as he unfolded his napkin. "It is such a small town, and the English have never frequented it."

"Frau Trenberg and my aunt are friends."

"Indeed! That is very interesting. Does *gnädige Frau* take red or white wine?—But is your *Frau Tante* then German?"

Patience raised her eye-brows. "No, my aunt is English, but I suppose it is still possible for an English person and a German to be friends."

"Naturally, naturally," von Vorbach assented with an uneasy little laugh. "Is not *gnädige Frau* herself a brilliant example that they may become more than friends? Perhaps your *Frau Tante* resides in Germany? Is her name also Saile?"

"No, it is not," Patience responded shortly; while Vorbach reflected that assuredly the aunt must be in trade, or something equally low-class, otherwise would her niece have been so reticent about her? If one's relations are titled, or in any way creditable, not only does one give readily all the information about them when asked, but one manages somehow to bring them into the conversation oneself.

"I had an aunt who went to England once," von Vorbach remarked. "She was lady-in-waiting to Her Serene Highness Princess Sophia von Schramburg-Plenhausen-Helgerode. She was my mother's sister, a Gräfin Schierwald auf Schierwald—the elder branch, you know."

His companion should see that he was not in the least ashamed of *his* aunt; in fact that he was sufficiently courteous to provide all particulars concerning her.

"Indeed," Patience repeated. Helmuth had again impressed upon her that evening the necessity of holding her tongue in check. "Let the gentlemen do most of the talking," he had said. "You will see how much better things will go if you do not make startling and tactless remarks which we do not consider in the best of taste."

"It was very sad that your parents could not attend your wedding," Vorbach said. "I hear that they are very ailing in health. It must have been a terrible disappointment to them to be too ill to attend the marriage of their daughter."

"Thank you, they are in perfectly good health," Patience said stiffly.

"Really! Then I presume the *Herr Vater* is

in the Army, or perhaps the Navy, and could not get leave?"

"My father is neither in the Army nor the Navy," Patience replied still more icily.

"With us nearly all the sons of good family become officers," von Vorbach observed, helping himself to compote. "But I suppose with you in England nearly everybody is in trade? It is certainly a better way of making money, and in Old England money is of course the first consideration. Still, I must say, I should not care to sit down to table with a manufacturer of buttons or sausage."

"With us a gentleman may do anything provided he *is* a gentleman," Patience retorted, turning her eyes full on her companion. "But we should hesitate to apply that epithet to him if he subjected a lady to a personal cross-examination."

Herr von Vorbach twisted his upturned moustache, returned Patience's stare with his most arrogant expression, and remarked superciliously, "And *we* like to know with whom we are talking."

For the next ten minutes he had leisure to examine the shining coils at the back of his companion's head, the sloping angle of a lace-veiled shoulder, and the rim of a little ear.

"She does not *look* common," he reflected ill-humouredly. "But surely if she is of good family she would have told me so, and not made all this mystery."

Herr von Remmingen was meanwhile holding forth to Patience on the beauties of his autumn trip to the Thüringen woods.

"I assure you *gnädige Frau*, it was a dream—

those miles upon miles of fairy-like, beautiful pine trees standing out against the deep blue sky—they talk of blue skies in Italy, but I have never seen such blueness as the blue of our own German summer skies. One walks and one walks with one's *Rucksack* strapped on, like any common tourist, and one is overcome—literally prostrated—with the beauty of everything. Thank Heaven it is one of our German characteristics that we never grow deadened to the beauty of our native land. I remember my eyes filling with tears the first time I saw the Triberg waterfall by night, illuminated with a hundred brilliant colours, looking like a colossal cascade of melting jewels—*Prosit gnädige Frau!*—You must get your husband to take you there for a second wedding journey. There is one particularly good hotel where they feed you quite excellently—blue trout and everything tip-top, and one drinks one's *Schoppen* and looks out upon a view which makes one thank the dear *Herr Gott* for the beauty of one's Fatherland——”

It was not difficult to keep up the “conversation” at this rate. Herr von Remmingen emphasized his flowery flow of description by gesticulating expressively with his white, manicured hands. Patience, gazing up the table, thought that the pairs of hands displayed so freely formed a striking commentary upon the relative positions of the sexes—those of the women showed, for the most part, traces of hard work and not too much care, while those of the men were white, soft and smooth, with long, pointed and polished nails. Herr von Remmingen's voice was uninterruptedly flowing on in a loud accompaniment to her thoughts, and by

her quiescent silence she was already rising in his estimation.

"The *Engländerin* is not nearly as disagreeable as I was told," he reflected, "but then the others probably did not understand how to take her. She evidently has a feeling for beauty." "*Gnädige Frau* should visit the *Residenz*," he said aloud. "It is a fine, elegant town and has a wonderfully beautiful park."

Vorbach, who had perforce remained silent for some minutes, and consequently felt very aggrieved, decided to sink his resentment towards Patience, at any rate for the time being, and broke into the conversation.

"Predow was telling me this morning that after his wife has bestowed on him a son and heir, he is going to present her to their Royal Highnesses, and attend the court balls."

"What fun!" Patience exclaimed, her eyes brightening. "I shall get my husband to do that, too. Of course I have been presented in my own country, but I should like to go to Court here."

"I am afraid that will be quite impossible," von Vorbach observed superciliously, "as *gnädige Frau's* husband does not belong to the Nobility."

"But he is an officer, so what difference is there?" Patience demanded.

"Of course, as an officer he can go to Court himself, but only officers of noble birth can take their wives."

"How ridiculous!" Patience exclaimed with her natural impetuosity; and Remmingen reflected how unbecoming such ignorantly critical expressions were upon feminine lips.

"It is quite right, *meine Gnädige*," he said stiffly. "The division between the Nobility and the other classes is one of the most important pillars in the structure of our glorious German constitution. For generations the German Nobility has placed itself, its sons, its possessions, at the disposal of its King and its Fatherland, and surely it is only fair that in return it should possess some exclusive rights and privileges? Why should those persons whose grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers shed their blood by their Sovereign's side be treated in the same manner as those whose grandfathers perhaps measured flannel in a shop, and who probably do not even know who their great-great-grandfather was?"

"No, we of the Nobility have never been self-interested money-grubbers. Instead of using our brains and our advantages to make fortunes for ourselves, we have placed them at the service of our most gracious Ruler." Herr von Vorbach spoke with the magnificent renunciation of a martyr: no Vorbach had been out of debt for last three generations, and he appeared to regard this fact in the light of a distinction.

Patience, who had followed this conversation attentively, realized for the first time the intangible but indestructible barriers which separated the two factors in the regiment—the Nobility and those who possessed no glorifying "*von*" before their names. The demarcation line was far less emphasized here than in many regiments, for the Colonel himself was not "noble," and the families bearing ancient names displayed an affable condescension in associating with the less privileged members of the regi-

ment. But in the light of the present conversation, she saw a little exclusive coterie, in which the von Ehrichs and the von Remmingsens gathered round them those companions who figured in the *Almanach de Gotha* and who could not but feel themselves superior to the rest of the community. Patience felt a rising irritation with the arrogant complacency of her neighbours, and casting all Helmuth's admonitions and her own good resolutions to the winds, she forsook the becoming feminine anchorage of attentive silence, and observed reflectively:

"It is a curious thing that with us in England, the better family you are the less you talk about it, and here it seems to be quite the contrary."

There appeared to be something particularly challenging in her cool voice and assured manner, for von Vorbach cried with some heat:

"And pray, why should we be ashamed of belonging to the most ancient, privileged class of the most civilized country in the world?"

"You would call your country the most civilized?" Patience asked in accents of calm deliberation. Her blood was up, and she had succumbed to the temptation of allowing her tongue once again to hit back when temper dictated. "If you said your country was first in science, or music, or thrift, I should probably agree, but in civilization—well, there are so many interpretations of that word. We say you can judge the civilization of a people, from black races upward, by two things—their personal cleanliness and the treatment of their women. The nations who treat their women as inferior slaves can never be the most highly civilized, And

what chance have you ever given your women? They have never played really big rôles in the world's history. It would be impossible to imagine a German Cleopatra, or Madame de Maintenon, or Queen Elizabeth."

The men looked at her with undisguised amazement. Vorbach's eye-glass and jaw dropped, and only the advent of the ice-pudding restored him somewhat to his usual equilibrium.

"We are quite content with our women," Herr von Remmingen remarked with his most haughty expression. "We should not care to exchange them for those of any other nation."

"I expect not," Patience replied with a light laugh. "You have trained them most excellently to your needs."

Conversation flagged somewhat during the remainder of the meal, and Patience was relieved when the assembly rose *en masse* and repaired to the adjoining room. Here the inevitable hand-kissing and "*Gesegnete Mahlzeit*" took place, and afterwards the men congregated in the sitting-room to smoke and drink beer, while the ladies remained in the salon. They sat in a stiff semi-circle round the table and the sofa, on which the two most important guests were enthroned. Patience secured a seat on the extreme outskirts of this ring, for she knew the result of being wedged in firmly between the matrons at the back—it meant captivity for the rest of the evening. Here there was no lounging, no toasting of feet on a fender. She glanced round at the ample forms sitting rigidly upright, all the extremities hidden chastely under the table; and she amused herself by wondering which was

cause and which effect in this instance—whether the women hid their feet because they were large and encased in flat shoes and thick woollen stockings, or whether they clothed them in this manner because custom forbade them being seen. She had observed the national characteristic to economize on the things which do not show; she had been told that it was sinful waste to expend money on dainty underclothes, for nobody sees them, and they do not last half as long as unadorned calico. When at home, in the bosom of the family, no right-minded German would dream of wearing any but the shabbiest garments—after all, what is the use of relations if you have to waste your good manners and your good clothes upon them? Surely one of the chief relaxations of matrimony was that when you got home, you could disburden yourself of your best coat, your tight boots and your social amiability, and shuffle instead into slippers and surliness. In return you neither expected nor wished your wife to wear her finery for your benefit—directly she returned home she tumbled out of it, and into an old flannel jacket which would not spoil in the kitchen——

The ladies were discoursing with great animation upon the well-worn topics that never seemed to pall. Frau Stoll's Ann-Marie had actually made a meat *Pastete* quite by herself.—Frau Henzel's baby had cut a tooth, but of course poor Frau von Vorbach could not bear hearing about it, as the dear God had not yet presented her with a little angel from Heaven.—Never mind, she need not lose hope.—Frau Rangel was married two years and eight months before she presented her lord and master

with a strapping son—Where did Frau Winkmar get that charming gauze? Not from Gerson? Imagine making it so stylishly oneself—it really did not look like it—Was it the same material as Müller was offering for two marks twenty-five pfennigs the metre?—Imagine Frau Mendl having to send her girl away—did she and the soldier-servant really—No, and you say she drank up all your methyated spirit—Yes, imagine what I heard about the Ehrichs' maid—Which recipe do you use for preserving cucumbers?—So the Stoll cadets could not get leave after all—No, I knit them with the thickest wool, and my stockings wear splendidly though I am on my feet all day.—Müllers have it either grey or black——”

The conversation wandered on and on, and Patience, listening absent-mindedly, wondered whether it was really appallingly dull, or whether she was herself at fault for finding it so. Each lady had now a glass of beer before her, which was frequently replenished by the soldier-servant, and they all appeared to have settled down for the remainder of the evening.

“Do the men never join us after dinner?” Patience asked Frau Henzel.

“Well, not often,” the latter informed her. “You see they like to sit together cosily smoking and drinking beer, and talking about the things which interest them. They find it more pleasant than having to make conversation with us.”

Of course; here they were all married couples, and all excitement of chase and capture, all incentive of youth and freshness seemed to have evaporated. Why waste time and energy in being

agreeable to an inferior creature when sex had perforce ceased to play a part in the intercourse? Patience respected and liked the women far more than the men, but she had had quite enough of entirely feminine gatherings, and considered that when an entertainment was given for both sexes it was ridiculous for them not to amalgamate.

Clouds of cigar smoke surged through the open doors from the adjoining room, interspersed with loud voices and roars of laughter. Patience peered over her shoulder and caught the eye of Leutnant von Marburg, who, with a young Artillery officer sitting near him, had been invited to fill up the gaps. He bent down and spoke a few words in his companion's ear; then they looked across at the isolated figure seated on the edge of the ring, at the sweep of filmy lace draperies, at the fair head thrown rather defiantly back.

"Oh, she is smart enough," von Marburg was saying, "but she is much too thin—however, marriage will soon cure that. In a couple of years' time she will be nice and round and plump like little Frau Henzel, and when she has had a few babies she will be more feminine in every way, and will find that woman's vocation is not to ape a cleverness and wit most unbecoming in the weaker sex. '*Das ewig Weibliche*' is a conception these sharp-elbowed, sharp-tongued Englishwomen do not understand."

"Has she really so much repartee?" the young Artilleryman Leutnant von Schosso asked curiously.

Herr von Marburg shrugged his shoulders. "She has had the sense not to try it on with me.

But if you like we might go and talk to her a little. She is sitting quite near the door, so we need not approach the dragon's lair where the old women are gossiping their tongues off."

Leutnant von Schosso assented eagerly. The elder men were deep in reminiscences of deer stalking, all talking at the same time and bragging of the fine specimens, the magnificent antlers they had bagged. "Yes, let us go in," von Schosso said. "I have met several Englishwomen at Homburg and Dresden, and I got on with them very well. I found them very amusing."

"Tastes differ," von Marburg observed, rising to his feet. "It is not necessary for a woman to be amusing if she is easily amused."

Patience watched the men come towards her with a feeling of relief. She did not know which bored her more, the accounts of the youthful Stolls' practical accomplishments, or the endless discussions about those intimately domestic sides of the regimental life which had at first interested her. Now, she felt she knew them by heart, and in her present state of mind it embittered her to watch these women spending their time, their thoughts and their abilities in saving and contriving so that the Lords of the Creation should have the maximum of comfort and of money to spend upon themselves."

"We have come to cheer up *gnädige Frau*," von Marburg observed condescendingly. "Herr von Schosso and I, as the only two bachelors here, feel like two lone outsiders among so much connubial bliss."

"That is a misfortune which, I should think, could easily be rectified," Patience said, crossing

one satin-shod foot over the other, and looking up at the two men standing near her. "All German officers know that they have only to lift up a finger and any young girl would be theirs for the asking."

"Come, come, *gnädige Frau*, you flatter us!" von Marburg cried in the bantering manner he knew became him so well. "But I should like to ask you as the only unbiassed person in the regiment, which young lady would you recommend me to choose?"

"What have her qualifications to be? Cooking is the primary one I presume?" Patience asked ironically.

"I certainly should expect my wife to be able to cook for me," von Marburg retorted, instinctively resenting Patience's tone. "It is what every man has a right to demand of the woman he marries."

"Demand!" Patience exclaimed contemptuously. "You men demand that your wives should cook, work, economize and be your black slaves, and pray what do you do for them in return?"

Herr von Marburg raised his eye-brows. "Do for them?—Why, we marry them, we give them our name, position and all the advantages of a married woman. I do not consider it too much when I give up my liberty for any woman to expect her to be able to cook my dinner."

"A great renunciation of liberty!" Patience murmured with a sarcastic little laugh, but Lieutenant von Schosso interrupted her.

"I agree with *gnädige Frau*," he said. "If that is what I wanted, I should get a cook instead of a wife."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," Patience exclaimed. "If you engaged a cook you would have to pay her; if you marry a wife she pays for you."

Herr von Marburg reddened with annoyance. "Ah, I know in England the women neglect their husbands, their households, and their children, and spend all their time and money in gadding about. English ladies, I have heard, hardly ever see their children."

"That may be true about a certain type of ultra-smart and fashionable Englishwomen," Patience retorted. "But if you take the English equivalent of the ladies here, you would find they occupy themselves just as much with their children's upbringing. And certainly I do not consider it an advantage for the children at any period of their existence for the mothers to be working hard, and spending their time, energy and health upon manual work. However, of course I see that your system is a far cheaper one than ours. Many foolish Englishmen regard their wives as luxuries, while the eminently sensible German regards them as an economy."

"*Gnädige Frau* is pleased to be witty," Herr von Marburg said stiffly.

"Oh, no," Patience exclaimed with a great air of candour. "Please do not say anything so unkind of me!"

Luckily at this moment there were loud sounds of chairs being pushed back in the adjoining room, and the men poured in. This was the sign for breaking up. After lengthy leave-takings, the ladies squeezed into Frau Mendl's bare bedroom, encased themselves in their voluminous shawls, capes, and goloshes, pressed their fifty-pfennig

tips into the little servant's hand, and joined their grey-cloaked husbands, who were already jangling down the dark staircase.

As they hurried along the wet, deserted street, Patience battling unassisted with her umbrella, Helmuth slipped his arm through hers.

"You know, mouse," he began plaintively, "you do give people such wrong impressions. Vorbach was talking to me after supper and it seems he understood from you that your aunt, through whom you came to Stelnitz, was somebody not at all desirable. When I told him she was the Countess of Porfordshire, he would hardly believe it. Of course he could not understand your not mentioning the fact. And I am sure people thought it rather extraordinary for you to talk to two young *Leutnants* the whole evening."

Patience said nothing. Her own conscience was accusing her too persistently for her to attempt any defence. She had again allowed her tongue to run away with her, and she realized—as she so frequently did when too late—the foolishness and futility of not keeping it in check. After all, what good had she done anyone by finding fault and venting her sarcasms upon existing conditions? She had only succeeded in increasing the distrust and antipathy she must necessarily arouse in a section of the community. Besides, she was well aware of her husband's attitude towards such outspokenness; and whichever way she looked at the case, the fact remained that of her own free will she had married into this country, and her obvious duty was to accommodate herself to its ways and customs, and to make the best of them.

"Helmuth," she whispered persuasively, "*must*

I go to all these dinners and suppers? I do hate them so!"

He stopped with the key in their front door, and gazed at her in sheer surprise. "Na, 'of course you must—they are part of the regimental life. And why do you not enjoy them? Was not the food to your liking?"

She did not answer, but with a slight shrug passed through the door. When would she learn to cease kicking against the pricks, and resign herself to the life she had chosen?

CHAPTER VIII

ADELHEID's baby was born, but to the general disappointment it was a daughter and not the desired son and heir. Apart from the acknowledged inferiority of the female, and the consequent diminished kudos of giving birth to a creature of less worth and importance, daughters were regarded as more expensive possessions. Sons could, at the early age of ten, be placed in Cadet Houses, where their cost was extraordinarily little; and even if, on emerging from these institutions, they went into expensive regiments and incurred debts, there was always a profitable marriage ahead, with the subsequent settlement of pecuniary difficulties, and the shifting of expense from the parents to the wife. But daughters had to be prepared and equipped and made eligible for the marriage-market, all of which costs money. They had to attend seminaries and household schools, eventually to emerge at the age of seventeen, armed for the fray with domestic knowledge, youthful freshness and a more or less substantial dowry. Without this last item the other attractions might usually be regarded as of no avail, for what right-minded German would select a dowerless girl?

So there was but a chastened rejoicing in the Predow ménage; only Frau Trenberg was tearfully jubilant and could hardly tear herself away from her first grandchild.

Patience had little time or thought to spend upon her friend's affairs, but she thanked Heaven devoutly that the baby was Adelheid's and not hers. Life seemed to her complicated and difficult enough as it was, without that final complication which hung over her as a dreaded foreboding.

She was now completely engulfed in the regular regimental life, with its daily duties, its "Ladies' coffee-parties," its dinners and suppers, where no fresh face was ever seen and no fresh subjects ever mooted. Many of the officers had remained in the same regiment in the same little town for sixteen or twenty years—several of them ever since they first joined—and here, year in, year out, they plodded through the same régime, associating exclusively with the same people, and hearing perpetually the same views of life, and the same opinions voiced by persons who had never even admitted the existence of any others.

Yet Patience felt she could have borne this narrow-minded monotony—which had, she recognized a cheerful and pleasant side—if she had found more companionship and sympathy in her own home. But the relationship between her husband and herself had settled down into an intimacy solely physical, an intercourse in which there was no companionship to palliate an increasing laxness of habits and manners. Of course Helmuth could not be expected to surround her with the attentions and care she desired; the only "attentions" he understood were caresses, and the only "care" the piling of her plate with edibles. Though she battled against it, it irritated her daily to see him sitting complacently idle while she waited upon

him, and it only increased her resentment to feel that, according to the code of his country, he was not even behaving like a boor. Sometimes she tried to put her own personality on one side, and to decipher the nature of his feelings for her, but she found the result of this examination too humiliating. He was still enamoured of her physical charms, grudgingly impressed by her dainty fastidiousness, unconsciously attracted by the unusualness and novelty of her whole personality. But for her real character, her tastes, her thoughts and mind, she felt he cared nothing at all. It was not that he himself was a fool; he was an excellent officer, popular with his men, capable of giving lucid and good instruction to the non-commissioned officers, and eager enough for discussion with members of his own sex. But though she displayed an intelligent interest in regimental affairs, and he frequently poured forth the difficulties and annoyances to be combatted, she saw immediately that he never asked her opinion or wanted her advice, but that he regarded her solely in the light of a safety-valve—a passive and sympathetic listener to whom he could confide his grievances. If she attempted any criticism, if her quickness detected a point which he had passed over, if she summed up a case over which he had been blundering, his masculine sense of superiority was immediately up in arms.

“It is no good discussing this, dear wife,” he would say. “These are questions which women do not and cannot understand.”

It was, however, on the subject of art and taste that they most frequently collided. Though Hel-

mut had stated, with an air almost of pride, that he knew nothing of either and cared even less, still, in Patience's inborn and pronounced cult of both, he scented a lowering of his prestige, an implied criticism upon himself. Habitually good-natured, he yet could never resist a gibe at her artistic salon, which he eschewed as much as possible; and if she talked about books or pictures, he would assume a jocularly tolerant or semi-bored air. "Listen to my learned mouse!" he would say with a wink. "What guide-book or lexicon has she been studying to get up all this knowledge? It is a pity to waste it upon her husband who cannot be impressed in this way. Thou art so fond of thy horribly artistic green that soon we shall have nothing but green cooking—'Pudding à la Michael Angelo,' 'Botticelli Beefsteak.'"

His own witticisms—over which he would laugh immoderately—always restored his good-humour, and Patience, listening with subdued irritation, felt the inconsistency of her own attitude. Had she not declared herself weary and satiated with the cant of art and taste? Had she not violently assured the alarmed Mr. Penny that she desired a husband completely ignorant of these matters, who would not know a Botticelli from a Burne-Jones? And yet here her wish had been fulfilled to the letter, and she found its very fulfilment a cause for dissatisfaction. Assuredly Providence was playing a bitterly ironical game with her, chastising her remorselessly with the realization of her own desires! Hers was a nature which jumped violently from one extreme to the other. Her childhood and youth having dragged sadly past in

an atmosphere permeated with the cult of art, she wildly imagined that by plunging into antithetical conditions, happiness would be assured her. Now she realized that her desire was not the abnegation of beauty, but rather the possession of a beautiful domain of her own, in which she would figure, not as an unimportant adjunct but as the reigning Queen.

Here she found herself swamped in a life which demanded of her the things she did not possess, and which had no use for her abilities and gifts. She was wearied and disheartened with the struggles of marketing and cooking, with the arduous manual work of running the establishment, with the trivial intricacies of this type of German household. Though she was quick-witted and sharp, she could not in a short time acquire domestic knowledge which is inculcated into the German maiden from her earliest years, and which, for the most part, is entirely alien to the English mind. In fact she wore away her patience without deadening her distaste. Washing-day, with its atmosphere of soap-suds and steaming clothes, its piles of soiled linen, its disorder and upset, was a nightmare to her, and above the blows to her taste, her fastidiousness and her inclinations, there pressed the black weight of physical fatigue. Her slight, delicately-nurtured body, unaccustomed to manual labour of any sort, rebelled against the constant strain of household work. To play a round of golf or a set of tennis was a very different thing from standing for hours over a kitchen fire, lifting heavy utensils, stirring, basting, kneading until arms, head and back felt like breaking. Often in the

evening she was so worn out, so battered physically and mentally, that she could hardly stumble into her pretty clothes, and it needed all her force of will to brace herself for the effort of being agreeably conventional and tritely quiescent through one of the long "supper-parties."

And yet she dreaded even more the *tête-à-tête* evenings with her husband. Thrown off her balance by fatigue and worry, she frequently experienced an almost passionate irritation at his tricks and mannerisms, at his whole personality. How vast he looked when he sat comfortably on the sarcophagus-like sofa in the sitting-room, studying his beloved Army List, a cigar in his mouth, a glass of beer before him! Hurrying through on one of her peregrinations to the kitchen, she thought he expanded every day; she felt convinced—of what was indeed the case—that marriage was making him gross and fat. Certainly he was showing the effects of an ordered domestic life, with regular, ample meals, instead of suppers of thin soup cooked on his washstand at odd moments. His huge frame was putting on flesh rapidly, there was more than the hint of a curve below his waist, and his massive chin was supplemented by replicas only kept in check by his high scarlet collar. There was something, she felt, insulting and repulsive in this colossal fleshly male sitting complacently idle while she was working her frail, slight body to procure his comfort. To her unhinged imagination, he seemed some overwhelming animal of prey, preying upon her energy, her vitality, her beauty, growing every day more vast, strong and insistent, while she dwindled and weakened. Every-

thing in him seemed to her to have coarsened—his appearance, his jokes, his manners. He thought her ridiculously squeamish when she stiffened and drew back at some broad witticism over which he would guffaw and chuckle for half an hour. The idea of fastidiousness and decency between husband and wife would have appeared to him sheer affectation; he appreciated delicacy of feeling about as much as an elephant would an oyster. But Patience felt the most hopeless thing of all was his utter inability to realize his lack of understanding. It never even remotely occurred to him that he did not know his wife in the least. After all, what was there to know in a woman? If she behaved in an unexpected or extraordinary manner, it must arise from the fact that she was momentarily unwell. When he thought of the problem of the sex at all, he divided it sweepingly into three classes: the young girl, vain, alluring, desired and desirable, eagerly searching for her mate; the married woman, her search and object in life accomplished, her desires gratified, her vanity directed into the right channel, expending itself upon her husband and children—of her no more need be thought or said. Lastly the old maid, her desires thwarted, her sex outraged, a ridiculous derelict, the butt of the witty, a superfluous member of society, good for nothing but gossip and knitting. He was neither heartless nor brutal, but he looked at Patience through the spectacles of his national conception of women, and he was not entirely to be blamed for trying to push her into the rut prescribed for wives by accepted German tradition. After all, though he benefited to the tune of three hundred a

year and the wife he had above all things desired, still, from his national point of view, Patience was by no means an ideal mate. The household ran with jerks and upheavals, there was none of that thrifty comfort which is the surface of a hard-working economy, and is all that the German man usually sees of his wife's domestic labours. Helmuth had still to swallow culinary failures, far more expensive than Frau Trenberg's appetizing dishes; he heard of Marie's flightiness and incompetence, with which Patience apparently failed to cope; he saw the establishment conducted on lines which he considered wasteful and ignorant, and he had the uneasy conviction that money was being generally squandered.

And indeed the moment arrived when they were both forced to look the financial question in the face. The quarter's allowance had come to an end with astonishing velocity, and the next payment had not yet been sent to the bank. The establishment was run on ready money, and Patience turned her face with decision against any idea of incurring further debts—if they spent the next quarter's payment in advance, they would be hopelessly engulfed in difficulties. It seemed incredible to her that the cash-box should already be empty. To her eyes, uninitiated in the intricacies of German economy, they appeared to have lived in the cheapest manner possible. Helmuth, however, pointed out to her that it was great extravagance to have flowers always on the table, and clean linen whenever—as so frequently happened—he spilt the gravy or the beer. A short time ago she would have reminded him that even flowers and clean

tablecloths do not cost as much as bottles of champagne, but now she held her tongue. It was not that she had become either cowed or diplomatic, but merely that she had at last realized the futility of attempting to hammer new ideas into a thick skull—the only result was to hurt one's own hands. But Helmuth's whole attitude towards money remained incomprehensible to her. He would give waiters and servants the meanest little tips, or even slip away without remunerating them at all; and Paul would be dubbed a camel, an ass and a "stupid-head" if he spent a couple of pfennigs too much upon some commission. Yet, on the other hand, Helmuth would occasionally make the wildest purchases without even inquiring the price, and if Patience remonstrated would remark with his grandest air, "Dear wife, I am not a Jew, but a German officer, and German officers are not brought up to bargain and trade." Whenever he imagined that his position and prestige demanded it, he would scatter money. He had the moral courage to evade tips, but none to resist ordering a couple of bottles of champagne when he thought it was expected of him.

And so the time came when the ravaged cash-box stood between them, and husband and wife eyed one another over it, each convinced of the fact that the other had been wasteful and extravagant.

"Well, we must do as I used to when I was a bachelor," Helmuth at last observed, "live upon thin soup till the end of the month. We are, anyhow, invited to plenty of dinners and suppers, so we shall not have empty stomachs every evening."

It was during this period of abstinence and re-

trenchment that Helmuth showed to the best advantage. If before he had frankly enjoyed his good food, had consumed it and discussed it with gusto and appreciation, now that it had temporarily ceased, he ate his bread-and-cheese and potatoes with a perfectly good grace.

"We must not call them potatoes in their dressing-gowns," he would remark as he stripped off their skins. "That would offend my elegant heartsleaf. We must call them potatoes in their dinner dresses!"

This joke pleased him mightily, and Patience had the benefit of it every evening. Either it was: "Mouse, do have some more potatoes in their dinner dresses!" or "Little wife, why are there no potatoes in their dinner dresses to-night? I always like everything to be elegantly dressed, even my food!"

When Paul placed the frugal meal on the table, Helmuth would exclaim with his loud laugh: "At least, *Frauchen*, this fare is good for my figure. I was getting quite a *Civilbäuchlein*." Which was his refined method of saying that he showed signs of developing a corporation such as many of his civilian neighbours owned.

It Patience failed to laugh at his jokes, or applaud his witticisms, he would rally her with a tender tolerance. "Thou must try to acquire a sense of humour, little mouse. The great thing in life is to look at things with humour, and I have often found a good joke is worth more than a sermon. I know the English are by nature mournful and lugubrious, but thou must try to learn our splendid German gaiety and fun. If thou canst not ap-

preciate a good joke, thou lovest half the enjoyment in life."

"You appreciate your own so thoroughly that you haven't time to notice my enthusiasm," she replied, pushing back her plate. This reduced fare was telling upon her, as she hardly ever touched the two items of which it was chiefly constituted, but Helmuth did not notice the dark rings under her eyes, and the transparency about her fair oval face. Only her slimness distressed him. "Thou wouldst be far prettier if thou wert double the size," he would say. "But that will be all right—only wait until——" He would shake his finger archly; and she waited indeed with a sickening sense of dread.

On the evening of the big regimental ball, he was more noisy than usual, making jokes and laughing hilariously as he struggled into his parade uniform.

"The Heavens be thanked for our reduced diet," he panted, "I can hardly get into these things as it is."

Standing before the glass, he removed his moustache-trainer—it was a birthday gift from the *Frau Major*, and was embroidered with the words "Good-morning, darling"—then, after a careful brush and a sprinkling of scent, he turned to survey his wife.

She looked extraordinarily ethereal and unsubstantial in her filmy white gown, an antique crown of jewelled leaves in her hair, her mother's emerald pendant suspended round her slim throat. Even Helmuth, thick-skinned and unimaginative, was suddenly conscious of her elusiveness and aloof-

ness, was struck with the fact that though this was his wife, his possession, she was a creature from a different universe, who somehow always managed to slip through his big fingers. And a gust of annoyance swept over him. 'After all, she was not a comfortable sort of wife; she had all kinds of odd, incomprehensible ideas and ways, she managed in some slippery, evasive manner, to convey blame, contempt, disdain; she could in a subtle un-understandable way, make one feel foolish, awkward and wrong, and when one naturally wished to upbraid her for her presumption, there was nothing upon which one could take hold. She never seemed really amused at the right things, yet at other times when there was no cause for mirth, her lips would twitch oddly and a sparkle of laughter shine in her blue eyes. This was unpleasant: one's wife should laugh at one's jokes, but should not have private jokes of her own which she does not even deign to impart. And what can be more uncomfortable than a wife who says nothing but looks worlds of disgust and contempt at any little lapses and irregularities, natural enough in married life? Helmuth squared his huge shoulders. The worst of it was—though this thought only hovered vaguely in his consciousness—that this frail, slim creature actually threatened his male superiority. There were moments when he felt uneasily that she had the better of him, that she was mocking him derisively for some reason he could not grasp. And though these moments were swallowed quickly in a tide of masculine and national assurance, still they left upon his mind an impression of lessened security.

As he examined her this evening, he thought with regret of the round, substantial, comfortable wives his comrades had so wisely chosen. One knew exactly what they would say and do and wear and think. There was a feeling of restful security about such women; they offered no problems to worry and annoy. If the husband relaxed his manners at home, they turned no eye of criticism and rebuke upon him—instead, they ministered to his needs with admiring love and solicitude. To-night even his wife's appearance irritated Helmuth. What right had she to look so unusual, so different from everybody else? Brought up in the most stereotyped and narrow *milieu*, he had an instinctive suspicion of anything novel, though at the same time he was powerfully attracted by it. Patience, slim and graceful in her Paquin gown, with the diamonds glittering in her waved hair, was a startling enough vision for Stelnitz, and Helmuth and his surroundings clung to conventionality as the mainstay of social life.

"You are terribly thin," he said rather spitefully. "We must try to fatten you up till you get a nice plump figure like the other ladies."

The little derisive smile he hated so much hovered round her lips, but she only observed gently, "Then I should have to get new clothes, and you would not like that at all."

"Well, it is time we started. Paul, thou camel, where is my cloak?"

Patience, struggling into hers, thought of this same occasion a year ago, when the world still lay before her and everything was novel and attractive. As a guest upon the little stage of Stel-

nitz life, she had received a delightful ovation, she had seen the glitter of uniforms, the gaiety and enthusiasm in her audience, but she had realized nothing of the bare discomfort behind the scenes. Now that she had committed herself to a permanent and irrevocable engagement, she found that the rôle of the courted star had been snatched from her, and that she was expected to content herself instead with that of the modest, dutiful wife, who figures far down in the programme, and is satisfied with plain costumes and a modicum of applause. In the life here everything seemed mapped out and arranged. There was no place or allowance for individuality; if any member of the community did not fit into the prescribed mould, firm welding and paring must ensue until all unconventional corners were removed, and all unevennesses of originality and initiative smoothed away.

Patience felt she knew the whole monotonous, narrow régime by heart, and yet, that evening, she was to see a side of her husband's character which she had never apprehended before.

The scene in the big ball-room was such an exact replica of the one she had taken part in a year ago, that it seemed incredible so much should have happened since then. Everybody looked identical—many of the ladies had on even the same costumes, with perhaps the addition of some new trimmings—the band was playing the same old waltz, the Colonel was receiving and distributing attentions among his guests in the same pompous, consequential manner, the young girls were simpering and palpitating, the *Leutnants* ogling and preparing for conquest just as they had done last

year, and just as they would do for indefinite years to come. And there, ranged against the walls, were the same fat wives of the town authorities—the *Frau Geheimrat*, the *Frau Kommerzienrat*, the *Frau Gymnasialdirektor*—still on the anxious lookout for possible slights, still gossiping and discussing the same old topics—as Patience passed, the conversation was buzzing round the blue and white enamel pans of a beloved daughter's equipment.

Everything was the same, only she herself had changed, and the fundamental change in her position was obvious enough. She was no longer a "young girl," no longer a fresh, unappropriated feminine morsel, to be courted, coveted and chased. She was "on the shelf," and the *Leutnants* who had swarmed round her last year, were now paying their attentions to the *ingenues*, scattering their compliments among the rows of blushing maidens, while for her they had only a respectful hand-kiss and a few perfunctory words. She stood among the married women receiving the salutations of the elder men, and she saw Irmgard and Ilse, separated from her by the gulf of matrimony, holding their courts as they and she had done the previous year.

She danced with Helmuth and tried in vain to re-capture some of the intoxicating fire she had felt before; she walked through a stiff set of lancers with Herr von Remmingen, curtsying and bowing to the fat, red-faced Hauptmann Winkmar, who was her *vis-à-vis*, and who looked more gross and sodden than ever. And all the time she felt terribly old and stale, as if there must be wrinkles

round her eyes and mouth, as if all her youth and buoyancy had gone. Had she indeed grown suddenly unattractive and faded? She examined some of the girls round whom the men were congregating—shapeless creatures, barely emerged from the fat awkwardness of flapperdom, attired in tasteless finery, giggling and commonplace. Yet there could be no doubt that the men now preferred them to herself—to her refined daintiness, her exquisite gown, and her easy, assured *savoir faire*. When she compared the position of the young married woman in England—her popularity, her privileges, and the fact that many young men find her society infinitely more agreeable than that of the raw girl—she understood still less the German woman's wild desire for a status which appeared to bring with it nothing but drudgery denuded of all entertainment. And yet, undoubtedly, the women seemed to enjoy their life; they might sometimes grumble at domestic, conjugal, and regimental difficulties, but, after all, where would the zest of their conversation have been without these topics of complaint? Patience was beginning to realize with what cunning instincts of self-preservation the men had hedged round feminine development. By persistently and loudly praising those attributes and accomplishments which ministered to their personal comfort, they had made the women regard them as the most desirable of attainment, and devote all their energies to the pursuit of them. The German male advertised his ideal of domestic womanhood, equipped with all the positive and negative qualifications necessary to his well-being; and German maidenhood, passionately

desirous of finding favour in his eye, modelled itself slavishly upon the popular pattern. The ideal wife, they saw, was not the clever, witty, brilliant woman—such attributes besides being positively displeasing to the average husband, connote waste of time over self-culture, instead of concentration upon those things conducive to male comfort—therefore they curbed and killed any tendencies in this direction, and devoted themselves exclusively to household affairs. She must also not possess initiative and spirit, else she might rebel at carrying everything while her spouse went empty-handed—therefore a proper meekness and diffidence must be cultivated. The ideal was, again, not the slim, trim, smart woman—care of the figure and person means expenditure of time and money, precautions, fusses, and theories about the bearing of children, the amount and nature of physical work, the necessity of proper rest and exercise—therefore male admiration was loud in extolling broad, unrestrained, large-hipped femininity, and the women, following their cue, clothed their spreading figures with tasteless frugality, and felt that they were keeping up the high standard of German wifehood. And certainly there was something to be said for this system, Patience reflected. She had not come across a single case in Stelnitz of a woman who considered herself misunderstood, unappreciated, or neglected. So thoroughly had they been imbued with their inferior position and capabilities, that they did not expect or require any understanding of their character; and surely sufficient appreciation had been shown them by the fact that they had been chosen in marriage by one

of these Lords of the Creation? As for ideas about neglect—a woman with a household and family has far too much work and proper interests to have room for such morbid and presumptuous vapourings. So Patience, looking round, decided that she would waste no more pity upon these members of her sex; but all the more did the tragedy of her own position force itself upon her mind. What a hopelessly stupid blunder it had been for a creature of her tastes, upbringing, and character to marry Helmuth, and with him his nationality, surroundings and prejudices! He should have espoused Ilse Stoll—an ideal Teuton housewife, round little figure, conventional little mind and hardworking little hands all complete!

Here her reflections—which had been carried on behind the barrier of Major Mendl's huge person—were suddenly interrupted. Herr von Sasewitz was bearing down upon her with his young wife—at whose domestic ignorance Stelnitz had been so shocked—and a tall man in a strange uniform which Patience had never seen before.

"*Gnädige Frau*, I want to introduce my wife to you," Leutnant von Sasewitz said; and Patience found herself shaking hands with a little woman who looked as much out of place in her present surroundings as did the English girl herself. Her entire outfit was obviously the work of French hands; a Paris *corsetière* had shaped her figure into fashionable lines, and a Paris shoemaker had forced her feet into the highest-heeled Louis XV slippers. Her ultra-fashionable, startlingly elaborate gown blazed with modern jewelry, as did her plump neck and arms, and her hair was dressed

with the artificial exaggeration of a barber's block.

"I am so frightfully glad to meet you, Frau Rabenstedt!" she exclaimed, shaking Patience's hand effusively and eyeing her with obvious interest. "I am sure you and I shall be friends. Of course I find this little town just awful! You see I and my father have travelled everywhere—Monte Carlo, Paris, Vienna, so you can imagine what I think of Stelnitz! However, when I have got my auto and we have built a villa made habitable with electric light, bathrooms and central heating, I may manage to get along!"

She babbled on, interspersing her conversation with French and English expressions, bragging of the glories of their huge Berlin villa, outstripping all others in the Kurfürstendam by its elaborate architecture and its palatial equipment, giving highly coloured accounts of the sumptuous entertainments which took place within its magnificent walls, of the automobiles and tip-top English thoroughbreds with which she made such a sensation in the Thiergarten, with side allusions to the illustriousness and antiquity of her husband's family, and the joy with which she had been received to its noble bosom.

She was, in fact, the product of a new wealth, with all its ostentatious self-advertisement, its indiscriminating love of display. Frau von Sassewitz, née Fräulein Wally Hartrodt, was the only child of the house of Hartrodt brothers, famous manufacturers of cheap, inferior fancy goods—imitation leather frames, decorated blotters, post-card albums and note-books—all shoddy and meretri-

cious, but selling by the hundreds of thousands for the home market and also for foreign export. In provincial shops all over England, Hartrodt's fancy articles might be found, amazingly cheap and disgracefully bad, but eminently marketable; and thus a large share of profits flowed from Britain into the Hartrodt exchequer, and helped to swell their ever-increasing fortune.

The entrance of Frau von Sassecwitz—née Fraulein Wally Hartrodt—into the 290th regiment, typified the invasion of the old, simple, thrifty conservative German militarism by the modern, mercantile, wealthy element. This powerful, blatantly-opulent class, rising from a new but rapidly increasing world-trade, was regarded with suspicion and disapproval by the narrow, rigid clique which from generation to generation has provided its Fatherland with soldiers, remaining proudly aloof from all innovations, content to economize and stagnate, and lead simple, circumscribed lives, gilded by the prestige of a military exclusiveness.

The Frau Baronin von Sassecwitz—as she always styled herself—had moved away, and Patience found the young man in the strange uniform bowing before her.

“My brother,” Herr von Sassecwitz introduced him. “He is a Captain in the Königshausen Uh-lans and is just home from China and Africa.”

Patience saw a tall, slight man with a clipped moustache and a tanned face, a man who for one instant, despite the blue and yellow uniform, reminded her of someone in a rough bespattered shooting-suit, holding her hand in the Colne fields while the rain beat between them. Only for one

instant, then the likeness faded and she found herself saying in her ordinary voice:

"You have just returned from Africa? How very interesting!"

Herr von Sassewitz had departed with Frau von Vorbach, and his Uhlan brother moved to Patience's side.

"*Gnädige Frau* is English?" he said. "I have enjoyed much kindness and hospitality from your countrymen at the other end of the world."

"Yes, I am English," Patience exclaimed with a flush of pleasure. "That is," she added, "I was English until I married, and then I was told I was English no longer, but that I belonged to my husband's country. But I don't think one can ever really give up one's country, do you?"

"Seldom," her companion replied. "And of all nationalities I should say the English most rarely do so. Though the Englishman and woman have always travelled more than anybody else, and though they make themselves at home in the most inaccessible corners of the earth, they always remain English through and through, keeping rigidly to their own habits and customs. The number of Germans who become naturalized English must be a hundred times as great as the number of English who become German subjects."

Patience assented eagerly. This was the first time for many months that a man had talked to her intelligently and naturally, as if to a person capable of understanding. She was satiated with the long dissertations upon the scenic beauties of the Fatherland, with the trivial local gossip, with the loquacious platitudes and trite jokes which con-

stituted the conversational diet male Stelnitz offered to the opposite sex. Here was a man who had seen the world, who had sympathies with her country, and who was apparently ready to talk to her on terms of mental equality. Well, she would make the most of this opportunity—the rest of the assembly might think or do what it liked. “I wish you would tell me about your travels,” she said, giving him a very bright glance from her fringed eyes.

“With the greatest of pleasure. Would *gnädige Frau* like to dance, or shall I find seats somewhere?”

“I don’t care to dance; it is as crowded as an English ball. We might find a quiet corner in one of the rooms beyond.”

Rittmeister von Sasewitz offered his arm, and they made their way through the crowd of people standing round the walls, across the dining-room and into a small apartment, equipped with the usual large table dotted with beer glasses.

This room was empty with the exception of Frau von Ehrich, who, surrounded by three of the youngest *Leutnants*, was pretending to mesmerize Retzingk. Holding his head in her fat white hands, she affected to read the thoughts passing through it, and, judging from the shouts of laughter and the chuckled comments, they were of an exceedingly risky nature.

Patience threw her one disgusted glance and retired to the opposite corner, where Sasewitz took a chair by her side.

“You must find Stelnitz a contrast to England,” he remarked.

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"And you must find it a contrast to Africa," she replied.

"My garrison is a little bigger than Stelnitz, but infinitely more gossiping, and I got so deadly tired of the tittle-tattle and routine that I volunteered for foreign service and got placed *à la suite* for two years. If one sticks, year in and year out, in one of these little nests, one becomes so stale and petty that at last one takes a vital interest even in one's neighbours' dinner!"

"That seems to me the greatest disadvantage of your military system," Patience interposed. "You go on year after year—perhaps your whole existence—in the same garrison instead of being moved about. Of course you must become narrow and blunted."

Roars of laughter came from the other end of the room, and the noise of a capsized chair. "But, *gnädige Frau*, that is not fair!" Retzingk's high voice exclaimed. "That corner of my thoughts was marked private! Besides, I never believe the worst of Beauty unless she compels me to do so!"

"But she always does!" Frau von Ehrich shouted, clapping her hands. "What man ever failed to put the worst interpretation upon a woman's actions? If Herr Retzingk saw me coming out of Herr von Seking's rooms in the middle of the night, he would of course think I had been employed in saving his soul!"

"I have never imagined *gnädige Frau* paid much attention to the *soul*," Retzingk retorted with impertinent emphasis.

Frau von Ehrich gave him a playful smack with

her fan. "Or if the elegant English Missis sits all evening in a corner with a beautiful Uhlan officer, of course no one would imagine that she was doing anything but instructing him in Art?"

"The Art of what?" Retzingk demanded insolently; and, amid gusts of laughter, all eyes were directed towards the couple talking in low tones at the other end of the room.

They, however, were too much absorbed in their conversation to notice the interest and comments they had aroused. They were ranging over a wide area of topics, including the different methods of German and British colonization and treatment of black races, the necessity of compulsory service for all nations in the present day, and the social conditions in those remote outposts of civilization, where a handful of white men are thrown together.

"I should never have thought previously that I could be such friends with the reserved, stiff Englishman," Sassewitz assured Patience, "but out there he seemed to be quite different, and we got along splendidly. We imagine ourselves hospitable, but if we want to know what hospitality really means, we should go out there!"

Patience smiled at him with radiant gratitude. Though in Stelnitz nobody had actually abused her country, still she was always conscious of a smouldering resentment against it, she was constantly reminded of the fact that she was English no longer, and that she should be proud and honoured to belong to the glorious Fatherland, the conquering nation of the future. She thought there was something aggressive in this blaring, emotional patriot-

ism, which immediately aroused her to secret antagonism, and which flicked her own national feelings persistently on the raw. And now this genuine appreciation of her country and countrymen warned and soothed her. She turned to its originator with a gay animation.

"You must come and have tea with me to-morrow," she said eagerly. "And we will talk a lot more!"

Frau von Ehrich, passing out of the room on Retzingk's arm, with her escort of subalterns tailing behind after her, heard the remark and saw the accompanying smile.

"Old England—or rather I should say Young England—does not lose much time!" she whispered to her cavalier.

"The heavy Infantry retires discomfited, and the fort is captured by the dashing Cavalry!" Retzingk laughed.

"There is not much capturing," Frau von Ehrich retorted with one of her meaning glances. "The drawbridge is already down and surrender is imminent!"

"The poor routed Infantry!" Retzingk sighed in mock anguish.

"I wonder if he knows?" Frau von Ehrich murmured, and she thought again of the chilling snub she had received from this imperious, conceited daughter of Albion.

Certainly the time had flown without either Patience or her companion noticing the fact, and they started to their feet in some consternation when they saw figures laden with flowers hurry-

ing through the dining-room, and realized that they had remained away until the last item of the programme.

With a sudden flash Patience remembered the strictness of German proprieties, which for the moment both of them had forgotten. She turned with a startled and rather anxious expression on her face, and confronted the towering figure of her husband striding across the room towards her. He seemed more vast than ever before in his tight parade uniform, and compared with the wiry slimmness of the Uhlan officer by her side. His heavy face was red, and he was evidently extremely put out.

"There you are at last!" he exclaimed. "I have been looking for you everywhere, and nobody knew where you had hidden yourself. You have given me a nice fright—I thought you must be ill and had gone to the ladies' cloak-room. Then Frau von Ehrich said she had seen you here some time ago, but she did not think you could possibly be here still."

He was rating her like a naughty child, and she bore it silently, impotently furious, but realizing that whatever she said would only make the situation more uncomfortable.

Rabenstedt turned to von Sasewitz, clicked his heels together and made a formal bow. "Excuse me, *Herr Rittmeister*, but I will now conduct my wife to the ball-room."

The bow was returned with equal formality, then Helmuth pulled Patience's hand through his arm and hurried her off. But her blood was roused by his hectoring air of proprietorship, and glancing

over her shoulder at the figure standing erect in its smart uniform of blue and yellow, she said,

"Don't forget to-morrow, Herr von Sasewitz. Remember you are coming to tea with me at four o'clock."

But without allowing time for a reply, Helmuth dragged her through the doors and into the ball-room. She realized that this thick-skinned giant had been touched on some very sensitive spot, and after the Flower-waltz had come to its close, the adieux had been said and they were tramping home through the dark night, she braced herself to the encounter. He remained, however, taciturnly silent, hurrying her along as fast as she could go, and she saw that he was waiting to open fire until they were within their own four walls. So there was to be another scene, and she hated scenes more than anything! Never mind, as it had to be, she would stand up to him and fight to the bitter end. If he was particularly roused, so was she. She experienced a singular kind of elation in which a queer physical dizziness was mixed with a detached, almost irresponsible lust for battle, a feeling as if she had suddenly freed herself from all chains of prudence, necessity and obligation, and could act as she pleased. But her hand was shaking as she unfastened her cloak, and her knees felt so curiously weak that she was obliged to sink down on a chair in the sitting-room, where Helmuth had preceded her. Surely she was not frightened or hysterical, she thought contemptuously, then why did the room swim so giddily round her, and why did her heart beat so unaccountably hard? She had done nothing whatever to be ashamed of—she

had sat out a few dances with a man, and they had discussed politics and colonization. It was all too childish! She pulled herself together and faced Helmuth.

He was standing in rather a theatrical attitude, his arms folded, staring gloomily into space. "I wish you to understand," he broke out violently, "that I am not the man to put up with this sort of thing! Not only the whole regiment, but the whole town is talking of your behaviour. If you imagine that I am going to act the complaisant befooled husband, you have made a — mistake."

He brought his huge fist down on the table with an oath. His face was suffused with red, there were pouches round his eyes and mouth; it was as if in losing all self-control, he had parted with some physical cohesion which had kept his vast frame together.

Patience had risen to her feet. "You are not behaving like a gentleman," she said, her eyes blazing.

"And may I ask if you have been behaving like a lady? If you had heard the insinuations, the remarks already made about you, you might feel some proper shame."

"You mean by that Frau von Ehrich?" Patience demanded scornfully. "A woman who hasn't a decent thought in her head, who flirts disgustingly with any subaltern she can find! And yet you make this fuss because I sit out a few dances talking about things everybody in the place is welcome to hear."

"The Ehrich woman is a —" Rabenstedt cried with another oath, "and if her husband

weren't as bad a lot as she is, he might fight a duel every day. But if you imagine you can take a leaf out of her book and carry on intrigues with anybody you happen to fancy, you have made the biggest mistake in your life! I have been the most good-natured, easy-going husband, but on that point I will stand no trifling. And your brazenness asking him to a *tête-à-tête* tea to-morrow!"

"How childish you are! From your behaviour one might imagine you had discovered me making clandestine appointments, or in goodness knows what incriminating circumstances. Instead of that, the whole awful crime is that I sat out a few dances with a quite harmless young man, discussing politics. He is interesting, and has seen something of the world, and I am sure we could be good friends."

"Friends!" Helmuth gibed, "who ever heard of a friendship between a man and a woman? I despise such stupid and transparent pretences. Do you imagine I am such a fool as to believe that if this Sassewitz had been old, with false teeth and a bald head, you would have sat all the evening discussing politics with him? Bah! why not have the honesty to confess that you have fallen in love with his stick-like Cavalry figure and his foreign airs and graces?"

She turned upon him in a blaze of anger, the comprehension of this scene and all that it connoted suddenly bursting upon her. This huge creature, whose interpretation of love for her was an overwhelming animal passion, was roused to the depths of his usually impervious nature by the ad-

vent of any imagined rival. And as he was imbued with his national belief that all the feelings, interests, conversation and intercourse between a man and a woman must be of an entirely sexual nature, he could not imagine the possibility of any harmless, neutral companionship with a member of the opposite sex. Of course, Patience realized, this was the inevitable result of the position allotted to woman here. If she is regarded as a creature only desirable for her physical and manual qualities, it should be hardly surprising that no one will believe in an intercourse prompted by any other reasons than those of sex or utility. It is sheer nonsense to pretend a mutual interest in politics, or any serious questions, for what man would take the opinion of a woman upon such things? If he affects to discuss social economy with her, it can only be in order that he may sit near her and examine the soft lines of her figure; if he troubles to launch out upon literary subjects, it is only that he may have the opportunity of squeezing her hand as they bend over books together. In fact, as the possibility of a mental affinity between a man and a woman would be derided by the average German male, he naturally infers that if they find pleasure in one another's society, it must be for entirely physical reasons.

And so Rabenstedt's fury, which had at first appeared so incomprehensibly brutal to Patience, had its reason not only in the man's individual character, but also in the national view of the sex question. She had roused the devil of his threatened desires and jealous suspicions, fostered and encouraged by his upbringing and his country's support,

and she realized that here his whole outlook and feelings were so crassly primitive that any appeal to reason would be entirely futile. Yet she had never been further from submission or compromise. She had always been willing to receive reproof and punishment if she felt herself to be in the wrong; if her conscience accused her, she laid down her arms. Now, however, she had done nothing she felt ashamed of, and the gross misrepresentation of a purely harmless episode was an outrage she could not accept.

"It speaks pretty badly both for your men and your women if you cannot conceive of a harmless conversation carried on openly where anybody can see," she remarked, pulling off her long, white gloves, and smoothing them automatically. "I should be sorry to give such a testimonial to my country's morals—or absence of them."

"Oh, do not pretend to be so virtuously superior," he retorted angrily. "Though I am good-natured, I am not a fool, and I know well enough that a young man and woman do not sit together all evening merely for the sake of talking politics. Perhaps your milk-and-water English husbands will stand that sort of thing, but I tell you we Germans are made of iron and fire, and we have a means of protecting our honour!"

"Your honour!" Patience laughed derisively. "You may be thankful, my dear Helmuth, if your honour is never threatened more than it has been this evening."

"What do the English know about honour?" he shouted, tramping up and down the room and gesticulating fiercely. "They have no code of hon-

our at all—they allow a man to insult them, or steal their wife, without demanding his blood. But you will learn that the honour of a German officer is a very different thing!”

“You need not shatter the ceiling,” Patience observed drily, “and unless you wish the Kranaus to spread the whole of your conversation all round the town, I should advise you not to roar quite so loud.”

He scowled at her, but moderated his voice as he reiterated, “The honour of a German officer—you understand what I mean?”

She raised her eye-brows. “Are you going to fight a duel with Rittmeister von Sassewitz?”

“If I find him hanging round you any more and compromising my honour, I swear I will challenge him! It is my privilege to wear my King’s uniform”—he drew himself up, laying his hand grandiosely upon the breast of his blue tunic—“and I will never shirk the duty of keeping it unsullied!”

Patience had also risen to her feet and the two stood confronting one another. The garish, unshaded light fell relentlessly upon his reddened, disordered face, upon the perspiration standing in drops upon his forehead, upon the heavy rolls round his neck and chin, and upon the expanding lines of his figure, obvious under the revealing tightness of his *Waffenrock*. It also fell upon the shimmering white figure opposite, kindling fire in the jewels crowning the fair head and encircling the slender throat. And if anger flamed in the man’s heated countenance, it also blazed in the woman’s contemptuous eyes, and twisted the red,

sensitive lips. Standing thus, laid bare by the brutal revelation of uncontrolled anger, they appeared alien, antagonistic creatures, elements as incapable of fusing and flowing together as oil and water.

"I wish you to understand that your threats do not touch me in the least," she said steadily. "I am doing no wrong, and I refuse to be bullied and browbeaten. I have invited Rittmeister von Sasewitz to tea to-morrow, and I see no reason for cancelling the invitation. If you are so ridiculous as to challenge him to a duel, I cannot prevent you, but I should advise you to refrain, as you are a much better target and probably a worse shot than he."

She turned to leave the room, but he sprang forward.

"By Heaven, you shan't! I see your plans—you invite him to-morrow because you know I have duty and you will have him undisturbed! But I swear I will not stand it! Why, the whole of this evening you were making love to one another! Everybody saw it—you were gazing into his eyes like a smitten *Backfisch*, captivated, I suppose, by his scraggy, English figure and his foreign twaddle! You thought you had found a secluded little corner where you could spend the whole evening together unseen, but you were being watched, and by now all Stelnitz is talking about your behaviour. *Gott im Himmel!* even the Ehrich woman, shameless baggage that she is, wouldn't outrage the proprieties so openly as you have done—even she has never sat out three-quarters of a ball with one man!"

His own words seemed to inflame him still more, and as she turned away, he seized her wrists roughly, holding her in a tight grip. Besides the jealous rage which possessed him, was the conscious feeling that by using force he would subdue her and bring her to his feet. Woman, as he had informed Predow, was an elemental creature, who, ever since primeval times, has always admired strength in her mate; she acknowledges her master, and bends her neck to his powerful superiority. Hel-muth, pulling Patience towards him, his big fingers encircling her slender wrists, looked into her face expecting to read there a dawning admiration and surrender. Instead, he caught a glance of such concentrated white hatred that he stepped back quickly, dropping her hands.

And at that moment both of them saw the gulf opening and widening between them—the gulf of opposing ethics, tastes, nationalities, habits, sympathies and upbringing—a gulf which neither of them possessed the power to bridge.

CHAPTER IX

THE next day Patience was too ill to receive Rittmeister von Sasnewitz, or anybody else except the fat regimental doctor. He prescribed entire rest and quiet, and warned her husband that she must not be excited or disturbed. Helmuth, cooling down after his outburst of jealous rage, knew that his hopes were to be realized, and he determined, in view of his wife's condition, magnanimously to forgive his grievances against her. He understood nothing whatever of pain or illness in any form, and his behaviour reduced Patience to a condition of irritated frenzy. He spoke to her in whispers, creaked about the room on tip-toe, fidgetted with the silver on her toilet-table, and eventually let himself down heavily on the edge of her bed.

"Dearest little wife, I cannot tell you how happy I am! Everything will be different when we have a fine, healthy son of our own. Think of the pleasure we shall have in bringing him up! Of course he must become an officer—we could put him in a Cadet school when he is about eleven. Some people have objections to them, but my experience is that they provide a splendid military education; they imbue the boys with the glory of their Fatherland and the magnificence of their Army; they make them realize that they belong to the finest country and the finest profession in the world! And then he might either join the

290th regiment, or if he preferred either the Artillery or Cavalry we might manage that. What dost thou say, my treasure?"

But Patience had turned her head away and closed her eyes. Helmuth looked at her a trifle dubiously, then he tip-toed laboriously across the room, upsetting several things in his progress, and in a few moments returned with a plate of cakes and apples which he placed on top of a pile of delicately bound books by her side. As she still remained immovable with closed eyes, he bent down, kissed her on the forehead, and retreated hastily, pleased to feel that she possessed such an attentive and considerate husband.

So the dreaded contingency, which had haunted her with such grim persistence, was actually coming to pass! The last hope to which she had clung was shattered, and the future, which should have gained an added radiance, seemed to her full of the most hopeless tragedy. That she should have mismanaged her own life appeared now a matter of the supremest insignificance, but that she should be responsible for a helpless human being's advent into conditions she felt must become increasingly unsatisfactory, was the worst catastrophe she could imagine. How terrible it would be if her baby were the son Helmuth so ardently desired! Whatever he was like, his existence would be a torture to her. Supposing he was absolutely German in appearance and character, supposing no trace of her English blood was visible in him, how humiliating it would be to have borne an alien creature, one who would grow up to regard her country as his natural enemy, and who would be ready to use

the life she had given him to fight for its subjection! And supposing her character and nationality were stamped upon him, what unhappiness and conflicts would be his—he must grow up a German subject, and lead a German life, and woe betide him if he was saddled with her English temperament and sympathies!

There were times when she prayed that it might be a daughter; then her horror of the German woman's lot swept this desire away. After all, a daughter would necessarily be far more under her direct influence than a son, and how could she help imbuing her with national and personal tastes and modes of life and thought? And so she would condemn her child to a repetition of her own unhappy condition, or perhaps to even greater misery. She thought of Frau Winkmar's remarks about the mistake of unfitting children for their surroundings, and yet she knew it would be impossible for her to bring up her daughter in the manner considered correct by the Stelnitz community. Then what would her ultimate fate be? Suppose she succeeded in marrying—and with the small dowry and the unusual attributes Patience felt would constitute her sole equipment, this would be difficult enough—there stretched before her the ceaseless drudgery and self-sacrifice of a poor German officer's wife. Or supposing Helmuth had gambled away large quantities of their money, and they were unable to give their daughter a proper *dot*, or supposing from any other reasons she could not marry, there was nothing for her but the dreary, despised, empty existence of a German old maid.

Patience lay by the hour on her long chair tor-

turing herself with these thoughts, turning the question over and over, trying to see it in a new light, but always repeating the same old, miserable arguments which led to the same hopeless *cul-de-sac*.

During this period, when her nerves and sensibilities were all desperately on edge, Helmuth's presence was almost more than she could bear. One day when she was more irritable than usual and he more densely tactless, she lost her temper completely. He came in from the Skittles Club, bringing an atmosphere of beer and smoke with him, and dumped himself down on the end of her sofa.

"How is my little wife?" he whispered. "Is the poor little head better? Give me thy dear little hand."

But she drew back sharply. This perpetual use of the diminutive irritated her beyond measure. He tacked it on to everything: it was *Frauchen*, *Händchen*, *Köpfchen*, *Weibchen*. It incensed her even more than to hear her own name mispronounced. How many annoying tricks and mannerisms he had! Her merry giant seemed to her transformed into a heavy, childish buffoon—a buffoon who was more riling when he attempted light comedy than when he assumed the grandiloquent and the heroic.

"I have been thinking so much of the future, my treasure," he said, flinging his arm over her and seizing her unwilling hand. He seemed entirely to have forgotten the scene after the ball; the very next day he had behaved as if nothing had happened, as if he had never made the most violent

and humiliating accusations against his wife, as if the whole thing were wiped off his mind. Because of their new hope and his wife's condition he had decided to forgive everything, and he imagined that she must be filled with thankfulness and gratitude at his magnanimity. He would have been amazed could he have guessed the final blow to her feelings which this scene had effected. Though it had, in reality, marked a significant progress in their mutual estrangement, he could never have imagined that a wife could possibly harbour resentment against her husband because of his legitimately forcible expression of a just indignation at her behaviour. The feeling—which Patience possessed most strongly—that certain things can never be voiced between husband and wife, that once they are spoken the relationship between the two can never be the same, would have appeared to him hysterical and ridiculous. If you cannot say what you like to your wife, to whom can you then? She ought, in fact, to be the safety-valve and the buffer for a man's passions and temper. It seemed perfectly natural to him to hurl the basest insinuations at her one evening, and the next to overwhelm her with caresses and endearments. But to Patience these ebullitions were now so nauseating that she could hardly force herself to tolerate them, and had Helmuth been at all sensitive or diffident, he must have read the aversion in her face.

"I have been thinking to-day, little wife, what we shall call our son," he observed, settling himself firmly on the end of her long chair, dragging at the soft folds of her tea-gown, and squashing

her buckled shoes with his heavy weight. "I have decided that Ludwig, Wilhelm, August would be the very best selection we could make. Ludwig after my father, Wilhelm after our beloved Kaiser, and August because it is a favourite name of our Imperial Royal Family, and because I like it. What dost thou say, little mouse?"

"I dislike them all intensely," she replied, tugging her gown free from his weight and hanging her feet over the edge of the sofa. "I should imagine that in this instance I might have some say in the matter."

"Plapparaplapp thou naughty little tongue!" he exclaimed, shaking his finger playfully. "My little wife must not be so hasty, but must talk the matter over quietly with her husband who only decides what is for her good." He captured her feet and replaced them on the sofa, stroking them up and down with his big fingers. "Such impatient little feet in such useless little shoes and such extravagant little silk stockings! When wilt thou learn our fine German thrift, little treasure, and wear good, thick, practical stockings, knitted by thy own little fingers? And thou hast not told me what thou hast against the names I have chosen. Good old German names anyone might be proud of."

"I simply don't like them," she said shortly, drawing her foot away,— "I shall go mad if he mauls me any more," she thought to herself, with suppressed passion.

"That is no real reason, little one—that is woman's logic, which is no logic at all!" he said with amiable tolerance. "If thou canst give me as good

reasons against these names as I have given for them, I am ready to consider the matter."

"Besides the fact that I think them extremely ugly, I do not wish a son of mine to be called them." She was holding herself in with such force, that her voice sounded strained and unnatural.

"Aha! I understand! You do not like them because they are real German names!" he cried, his touchy patriotism immediately up in arms. "But I will tell you now, once and for all, that my son, as a German subject and a future German officer, will be brought up on German ideals and German methods. I forbid any foreign notions being put into his head, or his being taught any of your English habits and customs. You understand, good-natured as I am, on this point, I insist upon implicit obedience."

He gesticulated vehemently in the heat of his tirade, and the wicker sofa creaked and swayed under his violent movements. Patience lay back, a blind nausea sweeping over her, an unspeakable distaste and weariness of everything, a passionate longing to shut her eyes and never open them again.

At that moment the postman's knock sounded, and Helmuth, rising heavily from his seat, went out to fetch the letters. He returned with an envelope in his hand, which he was turning over and over and examining minutely.

"It is for you," he said, still keeping it in his hand. "It has the Colne post-mark, so it probably comes from the rich and ancient aunt. Perhaps she is sending a little cheque in honour of the occasion, or perhaps she is writing to say the old

gentleman has come round, and is going to make his grandchild his heir."

"Please give it to me at once," Patience exclaimed, barely controlling her irritation. It infuriated her beyond measure to have her correspondence interfered with, and to see Helmuth retaining her letter, examining and commenting upon it in this calm, possessive manner, nearly shattered her last remnants of self-control.

"Shall I open it for you?" he asked, drawing out his pen-knife.

But raising herself on her cushions, she snatched it from him, and was about to secrete it in her pocket, when he interposed.

"Please read that letter to me, I want to hear it."

His face had assumed an obstinate, inquisitorial expression, and Patience, glancing up defiantly, felt her determination weaken. Either she would refuse, burst into tears, and make an hysterical scene of which she would be ashamed, or she must control herself and comply with his demand.

She tore open the envelope, and under his watchful eye, skimmed over the contents. Miss Duff wrote:

DEAREST PATIENCE,

Though I have not heard from you for some time, I trust everything is going well with you. Your parents are sailing for Australia next week on the *Ormuz*. Colne House has been sold privately to the Cunningham Ropers. Apparently Captain Roper wrote from India and said he wished the price asked for it to be paid, and the whole thing settled before it came up for public sale.

Of course this arrangement spared your parents all the unpleasantness and worry they would otherwise have had. The furniture has gone with the house, but the collections have all come under the hammer. It is really an irony that your father should be indebted for so much to his old enemy and *bête noire*, Captain Cunningham Roper! He would not only have been at his wits' end if no one had been found to take Colne House off his hands, but he could hardly have met with another purchaser who would have shown such courtesy and consideration. This is one of the pleasant methods in which life chastises our pride, but I doubt whether Mr. Thaile has taken his lesson to heart. Otherwise there is very little news. Our country is rapidly going to the dogs, and will soon be ripe for the German invasion, in which I presume you will now take part! I wonder whether you have grown quite Germanized by now, and whether you have lost all sympathy with your old country? I suppose, as you are so happy, this is inevitable."

"What does she say? What does she say?" Helmut demanded impatiently. "Please translate her letter—of course I am anxious to hear the news, and my English is rather rusty."

His knowledge of the language had never consisted of more than a few words such as "Plum-pudding," "beef-steak," "mixed pickles" and "How-do-you-do," but this fact he had probably forgotten.

Patience gathered together her wavering self-control, and sitting upright read the letter aloud in German, suppressing, however, the last few sen-

tences, which she was determined Helmuth should not have the satisfaction of hearing. Her recital was punctuated by interjections from him—" *Zum Teufel! Verflucht! Herr Gott!*"—and, as she folded the sheet together, he burst out:

"What, they are bankrupt—they have sold their property and are off to Australia? Your aunt writes as if you knew all about it, and this is the first word on the subject I have heard. Do you mean to say you have kept it from me?"

"You have never asked me anything about my home or my family, so I imagined it would be of no interest to you," she said coldly.

"Of no interest! Upon my honour, I sometimes think you must be a bit crazy! It is of the very greatest importance to us—it simply means that instead of having our children handsomely endowed, we are let down without a pfennig."

He wore the expression of gloomy anger she had noticed on the evening of their engagement, when she had first told him of her father's certain opposition to their marriage, and she realized now for the first time how blindly he had counted upon a reconciliation resulting in a substantial increase to their funds.

"It makes absolutely no difference from that point of view," she said still more coldly. "As I told you all along, my father would never forgive me, and if by a miracle he ever did, we should not have had a penny of his money."

Helmuth was tramping up and down, angrily pushing the chintz-covered chairs on one side, as if he had a personal spite against each one.

"A colossal swindle," he muttered. "Instead of

getting help, to be honoured with bankrupt parents-in-law! A nice sort of disgrace for a German officer to have parents-in-law who are sold up, and have to decamp to the Colonies in Heavens knows what for a subordinate position! A good thing nobody here knows anything about it."

Patience had risen to her feet, her knees trembling, her heart beating wildly, "I won't have you abuse my parents," she cried. "As to their being a disgrace to you, they consider it a disgrace to them that I should have married a German! And if you married me for my money I am thankful you are disappointed and won't get a farthing more!"

She was disgusted with the sordidness, the mercenary element of the scene, but here again she did Helmuth an injustice. As a German, he had the right to expect that his wife's parents should provide for them to the best of their abilities, and according to the national ideas he was being defrauded of his due. His disappointment was very bitter, for he had regarded the Thailes' estrangement as a purely transitory condition: they could not long remain alienated from a son-in-law who was a German officer, and the advent of the first grandchild would assuredly bring about a touching reconciliation, crowned with a handsome addition to their present income.

He was so absorbed in his disturbing reflections, that he hardly saw Patience or heard what she was saying.

"And why does not your aunt say anything about our great piece of news?" he demanded suddenly.

Patience moved over to the stove, and began

with nervous fingers to rearrange the ornaments. "I did not say anything about it," she answered in a low voice.

"Heavens! You are the most unnatural creature I have ever met! If you had been a proper German wife, you would have written to every aunt, cousin, and friend to tell the joyful news! May I ask what you *do* write to your aunt about? You are always so secretive that I have never seen any of your letters. A wife ought to have no secrets from her husband, and here I find you have been keeping all sorts of things from me. You will kindly sit down immediately and write a nice diplomatic letter to your aunt, telling her of our happiness, and begging her to act as Godmother to our child. You will give her my affectionate greetings and tell her how upset I am to hear of your parents' disaster. Imagine selling Colne House! And I had thought we might go and stay there one autumn when I could get long leave. Though the journey is expensive, we should have lived free of cost, and if once I could have seen your father, I would have patched up things all right. And now—*Basta!* Finished—— And please who is this English Captain of whom your aunt speaks so admiringly? Perhaps one of your old flames?"

He stopped in his peregrinations and stared at her. She tried to look calmly unconcerned, but to her annoyance she felt the hot colour creeping over her face. Instantly his jealousy was aroused.

"Aha! So I was right! It is rather strange that you should never have mentioned this Captain admirer of yours to me—your husband!"

"Is it?" she retorted, her voice trembling despite her efforts to steady it. "I don't consider that the people I knew and the things that I did before I married you, have anything whatsoever to do with you."

This remark—which to him implied a confession—served to anger Helmuth still more. "Really!" he shouted. "Well, I tell you you have no right to keep the smallest little thing from your husband, and I demand to know who this man is and all about him. I suppose he is some stick-like Englishman, with his sport and his checked clothes, and his pipe!"

He stood before her, huge, inquisitorial, insistent, and she felt the irritation and anger which had been steadily rising in her, burst all bounds and swamp her in a flood of blind rage.

"I refuse to be cross-questioned! I won't tell you a thing! Have I ever asked you about your affairs? I don't know and I don't care about them!"

"So, so, so—it is as I thought. He made love to you, and you were in love with him! Perhaps you were even engaged?"

He had advanced a step towards her, and she thought he was going to catch hold of her again. In an agony of disgust she shrank back against the door, and faced him like an animal at bay.

"I wish to Heaven we had been!" she cried, and turning suddenly she rushed from the room.

He heard the sound of a key turning in the lock, then all was quiet.

That evening Patience was very ill, and the fat regimental doctor, whom Paul had been sent to

fetch, shook his head and spoke most seriously to Rabenstedt. The *gnädige Frau* must at all costs be kept quiet and calm, she must not be contradicted or excited. The *Herr Oberleutnant* must try to avoid topics of a disturbing nature, and must give way to her as much as possible. He must remember that ladies in this condition were apt to be excitable and nervous, and that they should be treated as one treats invalids and children.

Helmuth, crestfallen and frightened, promised to follow these directions implicitly; and Patience was left with a sleeping draught and a very subdued husband.

CHAPTER X

AFTER this stormy scene, Helmuth's behaviour to his wife changed completely. The red-faced old *Stabsarzt* had made him realize that such conduct jeopardized his hopes for the future, and he determined to avoid the possibility of a recurrence. His sick-room manner to Patience increased; he essayed a soothing, conciliatory tone in addressing her, and agreed immediately with everything she said. This she found an added cause for irritation; it was infuriating to be treated like a child, or a lunatic, who must be humoured at all costs. And sometimes she deliberately tried to incite him to argument, to break through his resolution of giving away to her unconditionally.

"Remember it is Frau Henzel's birthday," he said to her one morning. "You ought to take a bunch of flowers and congratulate her. And they have asked a few friends, quite informally, to spend the evening with them, and are most anxious we should go."

"I don't want to go!" Patience exclaimed petulantly. "It would make me ill to sit in a stuffy, smoky room for hours. Besides, Frau Henzel is a dull, *bourgeoise* little creature—she and I have nothing in common."

Helmuth opened his lips to retort, then suddenly checked himself, and observed soothingly: "Of

course, naturally, dear wife, she is very 'house-backed.' I quite understand you do not care for her."

But Patience had already veered round, ashamed of her unfair criticism, and irritated with Hel-muth's abrupt change of front.

"As a matter of fact, I admire her pluck and unselfishness immensely," she declared, "and, if she wants us, we will go this evening."

"That is a kind, dear little wife!" he observed benignantly; and as he clattered off to barracks, he reflected upon the childishly irrational and un-dependable temperament of women.

When, at twelve o'clock that morning, Patience climbed up to the Henzels' flat, a bunch of carnations in her hand, she found most of the regimental ladies already squeezed into the little salon. The *Frau Oberst* was enthroned upon the sofa, with Frau von Ehrich by her side, and the rest sat round the table on which a decanter of white wine, glasses, and a huge nut-cream *Torte* were placed. Frau Henzel, beaming with pleasure, filled her guests' glasses and pressed large slices of cake upon them. Outside, the band was giving her a serenade, and through the window—actually open for the occasion—floated the magnificent strains of the *Walkürenritt*.

"I have had such quantities of flowers," Frau Henzel exclaimed delightedly, pointing to a pile of little bouquets. "And look at this heavenly-beautiful painted screen the ladies of the regiment have given me! How can I thank you all enough?"

"We can never do enough for our dear little Henzelchen," Frau Trenberg said with emotion;

and there was much clinking of glasses, and many protestations of affection.

That evening in the Henzels' poorly-furnished flat, there was a very hilarious, cosy little party. All the communicating doors were of course thrown open, and in the dining-room was spread a cold collation, prepared entirely by Frau Henzel's busy fingers. The assembly split up into groups, seated round the various tables, and the soldier-servant and Frau Henzel herself were kept busy filling up the beer glasses, which stood before all the guests. Leutnant Brehm, fatter than ever, serenely pouring liquid down his ever-thirsty throat, was the centre and cause of much merriment. He not only showed no resentment at the jokes made at his own expense, but he contributed some himself which elicited roars of laughter from his audience. Then Frau Henzel, who was very musical, was conducted in state to the piano, everybody gathered round her, their beer-glasses in their hands, and they all joined lustily in singing *Volkslieder*, student choruses, and all the patriotic, sentimental and melodious songs so dear to the German heart.

Patience, looking on from a secluded corner where she had retreated, thought what a happy, enjoyable evening they seemed to be having. The red-faced Hauptmann Winkmar and his wife were singing out of one book, Adelheid and Diedrich stood arm-in-arm, Frau Trenberg, between her husband and daughter, was beaming contentedly, and in the background stood Rabenstedt, Brehm, and several young subalterns, shouting lustily. Everybody appeared thoroughly contented, the women as well as the men. Despite all the trag-

edy, poverty, and self-sacrifice which so often constitute the "brilliant misery" of German militarism, they seemed to extract much enjoyment out of existence. They gave the impression of a happy family party. Hauptmann Winkmar might get drunk and ill-treat his wife, Major Trenberg betray his marriage vows, Diedrich von Predow neglect his young bride, but that is part of the cross of life; men cannot be angels, and if they are kind afterwards, all injuries are forgotten, and everybody unites to enjoy existence, which after all, has a very pleasant, bright side.

Patience apprehended something of this spirit, and during the long hours she now had for self-communion, she wondered how much she was herself to blame for the failure of her matrimonial venture. Certainly she possessed none of the unconditional self-abnegation, the cheerful sacrifice of all personality, the modest claims of these women around her. Sometimes the humiliating conviction assailed her, that she was destined to be a failure from beginning to end. And yet she knew she was not merely a useless, luxurious idler. She possessed a very shrewd practical side to her character, and could have run an English establishment—even a very modest one—with capability and resource. It was that she could not adapt herself to these alien methods of management and living. She would have understood how to train an English maid-servant to be efficient and orderly; but with this German domestic, who expected her mistress to be constantly in the kitchen and who seemed incapable of any independence, Patience felt quite helpless. She could not treat Marie with that mix-

ture of familiarity and severity to which she was accustomed, and it appeared a sheer impossibility to drum into her head the necessity of wearing a clean cap and apron and of never answering the door in a dishevelled, untidy condition. After all, that paragon of domesticity, the *Frau Geheimrat*, whom Marie never wearied of quoting, had always gone about the house in a grey flannel bed-jacket and curl-papers, so why should her servant have troubled to acquire a personal neatness absent in her mistress?

No, Patience felt her great mistake had been in not realizing from the first the radical and fundamental differences between the two nationalities. Her one chance would have been to sink all her own prejudices and habits, and to adopt unquestioningly those of her husband's country. She wondered what the other Englishwomen who had married into similar circumstances had done. Perhaps they were more tactful, sweet-tempered, and adaptable than she—perhaps it had cost them no great struggle to identify themselves with the nation into which they had married, perhaps they were the type of woman to whom a husband, children, and a household constitute the whole universe, and who care for nothing beyond these. Or perhaps again they had married into other surroundings and conditions. She realized now that life in the big German towns, which to a great extent have become cosmopolitanized, in the midst of the wealth and luxuries which from year to year increase in the Fatherland, things would have been very different. But though in these circumstances she would have been spared the drudgery of manual servitude, and

the shackles of material poverty, she felt that she probably would not have escaped a mental servitude, a national and temperamental bondage which she found even more galling.

Sometimes Patience discussed these questions with Frau Winkmar, who often came to see her. Though her own troubles were serious enough—the fat Hauptmann had been more intemperate than usual, and Irmgard, still unmarried, was carrying on an incriminating flirtation with Leutnant Retzingk—she would always sink them, and listen whole-heartedly to other people's grievances.

"My dear child," she once observed, "we all live with a halter round our necks. If we continue cheerfully and patiently along the path of duty—or necessity, whichever you call it—it does not press unbearably, but if we turn and twist, and struggle to free ourselves from it, it frequently strangles us to death."

"Yes," Patience answered bitterly, "and if we ourselves have run our heads into the noose, that only makes it harder to tolerate."

Frau Trenberg and Adelheid often visited her, but their conversation was of a very different nature. They would sit on the chintz-covered chairs, busily knitting or sewing, and would discourse on the happiness in store for their dear *Herzchen*.

"Thou art going through a difficult time now," the *Frau Major* would say, "but once it is over, thou wilt forget it all in the joy which is in store for thee."

And Adelheid would dilate upon the beauties and charms of her Elsbeth, who was, of course, the most wonderful baby in the world.

Patience had plenty of time to herself now, for Helmuth remained away more and more as the weeks went on. He would look in at the salon door and say: "I know, dear wife, thou art best quiet, so I have arranged to have supper in Brehm's rooms, and I may be late playing *Skat*, so mind thou dost not keep awake for me." And the next evening it would be: "The *Herr Stabsarzt* says you must rest as much as possible, so I have accepted Vorbach's invitation to play billiards at Café Stein, and we will drink a glass of beer and eat a sandwich there. We may be late, but I will be as quiet as possible when I come back."

Indeed, such was his fear of disturbing his wife that he suggested moving into the little sewing-room, and Patience acceded to this arrangement with the greatest alacrity.

When, evening after evening, he was out, she would have a tray with some eggs and cold meat brought into the salon; here, in her sanctuary, surrounded by her own possessions, the pretty and tasteful things she loved so dearly, she would consume her lonely meal, thankful to be spared the preparation of dishes for her husband, still more thankful to be free from his dreaded presence.

Summer was upon them now, and in the cool dusk of the evening Patience would slip out, and go for solitary walks in the quiet by-paths of the little park. Stelnitz looked transformed in its leafy dress; clouds of acacia spread overhead, scenting the whole atmosphere with a delicate, sweet odour, and even the grim fortifications were swathed in a mantle of fresh greenery. Everything was rejoicing in a new life; only to Patience new

life seemed the essence of tragedy. When she passed under the wooded incline which formed part of the garden belonging to the officers' Casino, she heard the sound of laughter and of gay voices, and saw the glint of uniforms and of light dresses through the trees. Irmgard and Ilse were playing elementary, but most enjoyable, tennis with the young *Leutnants*; the whole world was joyous and light-hearted; only she stood outside the gates, solitary and hopeless.

One evening she fetched out the cash-box, determined to go over everything and see that all was in order. They had tided over their financial difficulties, and she had lived with the most rigid economy, saving every possible pfennig for future expenses. This was all the easier now that Helmuth was away so much, and she had not to cater for his more than substantial appetite. There had, in fact, been quite a considerable little pile of gold and notes put away in one compartment of the cash-box; and this hoard Patience now intended to count over, and divide up as far as possible for coming requirements. She lifted the lid, and could hardly restrain an exclamation of horror, for in the division which should have been full, there reposed two solitary gold pieces. At first she gazed in blank amazement; then the import of this rape broke upon her. It was quite impossible that either Marie or Paul could be responsible for it: the box had a patent lock, and only Helmuth and herself knew where the key was secreted.

So that was the explanation of his frequent absences—he had fallen a victim to gambling, that curse of the German officer! Of course, these

pressing engagements with Brehm, with Retzingk, and with Vorbach were now comprehensible to her! She had heard something of the gambling propensities of these men, though everything was done in the strictest secrecy lest a hint might reach the Colonel's implacable ears. No wonder Helmuth frequently came home so late that she did not even hear his return! And the sinfulness of it! Here he was gambling away her money, when he knew what urgent need there was for every penny in the future.

Suddenly she felt unspeakably weary and spent, as if life were too disheartening and complicated to be coped with any longer. She sat gazing vacantly before her, unable to concentrate her thoughts, and when the postman's knock sounded, she had hardly the energy to drag herself to the door. Then the latent hope, which never quite dies in any of us, suggested the possibility of some good news, some pleasant communication which might cheer her up, and help her on her way.

She opened the letter-box, and with a sigh of regret drew out a cheap envelope addressed in an illiterate, smudged scrawl. It was ridiculous to feel such keen disappointment; why should she expect some special intervention on the part of Providence? Barely glancing at the letter, she returned to the salon, and flung herself wearily down on the long chair. Of course, this was a reply from the woman whom Frau Trenberg had recommended her to engage as a help in the house. She languidly opened the envelope, and had read the first sentences before she grasped their import. Then she sat up, her cheeks burning, her limbs

shaking, and deliberately deciphered the missive from start to finish. It ran thus:—

MY DEAREST OLD HELMUTHCHEN!

Why hast thou not been to see thy Sophie for twenty-four long long hours? I have something most important to speak to thee about so I sent a messenger to the Casino with a note. Thou wast not there so I am sending this to thy home and hope it will catch thee in time to bring thee to-night to thy Sophiechen who loves thee so dearly. The most important news I mentioned above is that that dirty old pigshead of a Schmidt has given thy Sophie notice. It makes me swear—and I tell thee I *did!*—to think of leaving our cosy little love-nest where thy Sophie looked after thee so well and I have had so many happy hours with thee. Confound the old ass of a Schmidt! but Martha Knopf the same as was waitress with me at Krolburg and is now serving in Müllers shop tells me there is a very nice pair of rooms above their flat quite elegantly furnished which we could have for little more but one must take them now. Do let me know *now* (underlined eight times) and I have never thanked thee enough for that wonderfully-beautiful feather-hat and most-sweet little lucky pig with the jewels in his eyes.

Thy loving and devoted

SOPHIE.

As the crumpled page fell from Patience's hand, the whole room seemed to swim round her in a scarlet mist. She felt no jealousy—for, with her, jealousy connoted love, and her love for Helmuth

was dead—but a sickening disgust, an incredulous horror swept over her, a nauseating recoil, as if she had abruptly stepped into some foul rubbish-heap. This solution of his absences was one which had never occurred to her; she had indeed apprehended dimly something of Predow's behaviour before the little Elsbeth was born, but such a contingency in connection with Helmuth and herself would have seemed to her preposterous. She was only too well aware of her husband's passionate infatuation for her, and, this being the case, it was to her feminine mind incredible that he should be tempted to such a common intrigue. And to think that at this time, when she was ill and suffering in order to bestow upon him his heart's desire, he should betray her in this dastardly manner, and squander her money upon some low-class little creature! It was too humiliating, too revolting to be borne! She could never, never bring herself to touch him, to look at him again, his mere presence she felt would be a contamination. At this moment her hatred and loathing of him were so great that they shook her as with a physical ague. If only he were dead! But such things did not happen in real life—only in books the obnoxious husband was conveniently killed off. She felt a horrible certainty that Helmuth would go on living for ever, that she was chained to a repugnant fellow-prisoner for the rest of her existence.

She rose dizzily to her feet, and was suddenly struck with such a violent physical terror that she sank down abruptly again. Perhaps she herself was going to die? She felt a blind, agonizing fear, not of death itself, but of what lay before. Every-

thing was receding from her, surging away in a purple-red mist, in which she was being engulfed and asphyxiated. Then, through the on-rolling waves of faintness, she remembered the letter which lay on the ground at her feet. With a strenuous effort she stooped down, picked it up and tottered across to the writing-table, where a solitary candle burnt. With trembling fingers she held the smudged sheet in the flame until nothing was left of it but a sprinkling of black charred fragments, floating downwards.

Then in a blinding rush she lost consciousness and fell heavily to the ground.

CHAPTER XI

THE next morning Patience gave birth prematurely to the son Helmuth had so ardently desired; but her baby only opened his eyes upon a too-complicated world to close them again almost before he had drawn breath. The clumsy, old-fashioned military doctor, who considered the use of anæsthetics unbiblical and unnecessary, began to fear that the mother would follow her child into the land of shadows. And indeed Patience seemed to hover irresolutely upon the border-line of life, as if her spirit were too weary either to take flight or to sink back again into its human shell.

To do Helmuth justice, his bitter disappointment was, for the moment, completely eclipsed by terrified anxiety at Patience's danger. He flung himself on his knees by her bed, sobbing convulsively, the tears streaming down his cheeks, his massive frame shaking with grief.

"My little heartsleaf! My own little love! Do not die! For God's sake do not die! I will be a better husband to thee than I have been before, if thou wilt only stay with me! *Lieber Herr Gott im Himmel!* do not take her from me!" And this man who, though a staunch adherent of the Lutheran Church and a great believer in it as an institution, had otherwise never given a thought to religion, began to mutter through scraps of prayers, dimly remembered, to which he now turned with an instinctive belief in their efficacy.

The fat old *Stabsarzt* had at last to insist upon his leaving the room, but it seemed his prayers were to be answered. Patience's spirit regretfully folded its wings, and she came back slowly and painfully to consciousness and to life.

When, after many weary weeks, she found herself back again upon her long chair in the salon, she felt that another creature had struggled out of her former body—a creature who had nothing in common with the impetuous, intolerant, animated being who must now surely be dead and buried. And she looked back upon her old self and her old life with a curious detached scrutiny. The proportions of everything seemed to have changed: those things which had before appeared to her all-vital and all-absorbing, now struck her as pitifully insignificant and poor, while a vista of new perceptions opened out before her.

She looked round the room, gay and pleasant with her personal possessions, her books, pictures, and curios. Marie and Paul had even bought some asters and autumn foliage in the market to decorate the *gnädige Frau's* salon. And as she looked at the familiar objects, she thought of that awful evening, when the whole universe had seemed to be tumbling about her ears. Here, on this very spot, she had read the letter; there, at that silver candlestick, she had forced herself to burn it—she even thought she could detect a charred atom on the wooden cornice. But though she could visualize the whole scene with photographic accuracy, she could recall none of her loathing and contempt of Helmuth. After all, he had done nothing criminal according to his individual and national ideas.

She had been no wife to him, only a querulous, irritable invalid, and she could not condemn him wholesaley for seeking enjoyment elsewhere. Indeed, all through their married life, she felt she had only seen things from her point of view and never from his. She, with her broader outlook, should have made allowances for his limited vision and temperament. Instead, with an arrogant pride in her own personality, she had attempted to dominate her surroundings, to force her own standpoint upon them.

She thought of Helmuth as he had looked an hour ago, when he came in to say good-bye to her before starting out on a ride. In his high, spurred boots, the tails of his long, dark uniform pinned back, his ruddy face smiling, he looked the personification of health and vigour.

"*Auf Wiedersehen*, little wife," he had said. "Do not worry thy poor little head or heart. Next year we shall have the little son we long for. I won't be late, only Sasewitz has asked me to try this thoroughbred mare for him. She is a magnificent, fiery beast, and cost a good many thousands of the Hartrodt gold pieces."

He hesitated a moment in the door-way, then saluted with his riding-whip, and with a clank and jangle of sword and spurs, sprang down the stairs.

Despite everything, he had undoubtedly given her as much love as he was capable of. Because she objected to his manner of showing it, because her national and individual prejudices resented certain things, she had often rebuffed and slighted him when his intentions had been of the best. She saw now how bewildered and baffled he must fre-

quently have been at her incomprehensible annoyance, and how headstrong and disagreeable she must often have seemed to him. She, who had prided herself upon her imagination, upon her quick insight into character, had been as dense and narrow in her treatment of Helmuth as the most slow-witted, unobservant dullard. His protestations of affection, his idea of humour, had irritated her beyond measure, therefore she had allowed herself to snub and repulse him, she had been intolerant, sarcastic and bad-tempered, and by her behaviour had made his home so unpleasant that he had gone elsewhere. Now she remembered that he was frequently very long-suffering, that though his disappointment was very great, he had certainly made the best of it, and had tried to cheer her up in the only manner that his obtuse, blundering mind understood. All along she had been grossly unjust in punishing the individual for the faults and characteristics of his nation. And, after all, she had been by no means a satisfactory wife to him. She had made difficulties and unpleasantness, and had set herself in opposition to the rules, customs, and people of the country to which she had voluntarily pledged herself. If Helmuth, in his clumsy denseness, had frequently flicked her on the raw, she had deliberately used her sharp tongue to hit in vulnerable places, and she felt that the greater blame must lie with her. Poor Helmuth! Though she did not imagine that his was a nature which suffered acutely from regrets or self-questionings, still she knew he must sometimes feel a sense of disappointment, of vague loneliness. And now she had not even given him that which he had

longed for so ardently—the son he had counted upon, and talked about, and waited for with such delighted eagerness. Her maternal feelings, which seemed only to have been wakened to add to her pain, cried out against her bereavement, yet she was filled with a passionate thankfulness that her baby should be spared the unhappiness she saw awaiting him in the future. And she almost felt a traitor for welcoming her child's release when it entailed her husband's bitterest regrets.

The past was past, and no realization or remorse could wipe it out, but the future lay before her and she determined that it should be used to rectify old mistakes, to adapt herself to the life and the husband she had chosen, and to make the best of both. Not for one moment did she imagine that she and Helmuth would find one another in a new heaven of sympathy and comprehension. A physical attraction, an emotional exaltation, a romantic glamour, were all that she had ever felt for him; and this, in her rash inexperience, she had called by the name of love. Still, with all their differences and discordances, they must possess some points of contact, some interests which she, at least, should understand how to make mutual. She, who had always prided herself on her quick wit, her insight, her ingenuity, must prove the existence of these qualities by establishing a contented and peaceful relationship between herself, her husband, and her husband's country. Any fool, she told herself, can see the faults and weaknesses of others; to find out their good qualities is the proof of the highest wisdom.

She rose from the sofa, and walking unsteadily

across the room, leant against the window. The trees lining the street looked dusty and tired, autumn had browned their leaves, which hung limply, or fluttered to the ground in sudden gusts of wind. The manœuvres were at hand, and soon Stelnitz would be emptied of all its soldiers. Even now the town wore a desolate air: most of the regimental families were away, and the houses were shuttered and deserted.

Patience gazed down the empty street, and wished that Helmuth would return. With an echo of her old impetuosity, she longed to carry her resolutions into practice immediately; she wanted to show her husband some affection and interest, to make up in some way for the past. She thought he had looked at her a trifle wistfully as he stood at the door wishing her good-bye, and she had not even offered a kiss—a little time ago he would have snatched one, but now he treated her with an almost timorous anxiety, as if she might easily break.

How late it was! It was growing dusk; a heavy thunder-cloud was massing overhead, and the air felt stiflingly close and oppressive. Suddenly a vague apprehension, a nervous uneasiness fell upon her. Perhaps it was only the weather—still it was strange of Helmuth to stop out so long. She had heard that Sasewitz's new mare was an unreliable tricky brute—perhaps something had happened. But it was ridiculous to conjure up disasters merely because they chanced to have gone on a longer ride than they had anticipated. Helmuth loved feeling a horse under him, and rode whenever he could get a mount, and never before had she felt any

anxiety on his behalf. It was only because she was still weak and shaky, because thunder always affected her, and because, with her mind and heart full of her new resolutions, she longed to put them into practice without delay. Her eyes wandered down the empty street. A sudden violent gust of wind swept over it, tearing the leaves from the trees, swirling them round and round in crackling eddies; then a low growl of thunder broke the stillness, and some large drops of rain sizzled on to the hot pavement. She watched idly the dry leaves, tossed, pursued, flung about by the approaching storm; then the distant sound of hoofs fell upon her ear, and she leant eagerly out of the window, oblivious of the wind which ruffled her hair, and of the rain which beat in her face. But it was only a carriage lumbering slowly down the street, so slowly that she found her attention rivetted upon it. As it advanced nearer, she saw that it was a *Krümpewagen* with a soldier on the box, and she fell to wondering why such a conveyance was creeping along in this deserted quarter at such an unusual hour. The problem fascinated her, and she started guessing at which house it would be likely to stop. Perhaps opposite at the Rangels—but no, the Rangels were away; nearly everybody was away. She wished the soldier would whip the horses into a trot, and that the carriage would disappear: it somehow disturbed her, it filled her with a curious *malaise*. Slowly, slowly, it came down the street—now she could see the driver tightening the reins—was it going to stop? And why did she feel such an extraordinary tension? It had stopped, and here, before their own house. She saw a fig-

ure—a strange figure in uniform—jump out; she heard the clatter of steps, and before she had time to realize her dread forebodings, Sasewitz stood before her, pale, disordered, drawing back nervously before her startled interrogation.

“*Gnädige Frau*,” he stammered, “please keep calm—but your husband—your husband has had a— a serious accident.”

She took a quick step forward. “Don’t deceive me,” she cried in a low voice. “He is dead?”

Sasewitz turned even paler, his eyes dropped to his dusty riding-boots, and she was answered.

“It was not really the mare’s fault,” he said huskily. “When we saw the storm coming, we took a short cut across the woods. She was nervous with the thunder and put her foot into a hole and pitched him straight on to his head. It was all over in a moment—he cannot have suffered, or really known anything about it.”

She listened dully, as if her senses refused to convey facts to her brain. Then she caught the sound of a commotion outside, growing gradually nearer and nearer, the heavy shuffling of feet, low voices, muttered directions. With a cry, she pushed past Sasewitz and rushed to the door. Slowly, laboriously, they were carrying him up the stairs, staggering under his vast weight, stopping at intervals to rest and take breath. The doctor, who was superintending and giving directions, hurried up to her.

“*Gnädige Frau*, come this way,” he whispered anxiously. “Wait in the salon until I can join you.”

But she pushed him on one side, and following

the cortége, saw the soldiers lay their burden gently down upon the bed, and retire in an awed silence.

Then she turned and gazed at her husband. Lying rigidly outstretched in the uniform he had loved so dearly, he looked like the effigy of some warrior on a tomb. It seemed impossible to believe that this cold, immovable figure was the man who, full of life, health and vitality, had said good-bye to her a few hours ago. That he, whom she had never seen ill or suffering or pale, should be smitten down in this abrupt, brutal manner, her mind could hardly accept. There was something unreal, unnatural about the whole scene—surely she would wake up with a cry and find it was a horrible nightmare? But suddenly the ghastly actuality of it all broke upon her, and with a blinding flash she realized the utter irrevocableness of death. Too late—too late! The one thing had happened against which there is no appeal, the one final act which makes all remorse, all desires for atonement, all regrets, of no avail. A few hours ago a smile from her, a word of appreciation or affection, would have filled him with delight—now he had passed beyond all these. And she had not even given him a last kiss. This little fact hit her again and again with agonizing contrition: it seemed to her the epitome of all her belated, tardy resolutions. What good would they do him now? That one little kiss would have given him more happiness than all her grand aspirations, which beat fruitlessly against the door of death, closed irrevocably between them——

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There were two things which could never be wiped from her memory: the vision of Helmuth standing in the door, giving her a last look, waiting for the kiss she did not offer; and the haunting melancholy of Chopin's Funeral March, the muffled drums, the tramp of many feet as they bore him to his resting-place, with the pomp and last honours the calling he loved so ardently gives to its fallen comrades.

POSTSCRIPT

THE soft sunshine of a late summer day was shining in at Miss Duff's drawing-room. Patience, sitting in the deep window-seat, gazed out at the sloping lawns stretching in green, velvety undulations down to the meadows, golden with waving corn. Beyond these, again, a dark clump of trees was visible, showing where the gardens of Colne House began. Patience's eyes remained fixed on this point. Though she had escaped from her home with eager delight, though she had dreaded above all things returning to it, she now realized that too many associations, too intimate a part of herself had been bound up with it, for her not to feel a pang of regret at its empty desolation. If only she might run across those fields, as she had done so often, and bursting into the pale-gold drawing-room, find her pretty mother there, ready to receive the confidence and love her self-willed daughter had withheld so long!

But again she was too late. Mrs. Thaile was a prisoner at the other end of the world, and it seemed doubtful whether she would ever come home again. Mr. Thaile, a disappointed and embittered man, had fallen a prey to melancholia and a trying heart complaint, and his wife devoted all her time to nursing him with the untiring self-sacrifice she had always shown.

Patience sighed, and absent-mindedly turned the

leaves of the local paper she always read aloud to her aunt. "It seems strange," she said at last, "that I should only have arrived at the age when many girls haven't even began their life, and mine seems all over and finished."

Miss Duff looked across at her niece. In the two years of rest and quiet, she had regained her health and her energy, youth had reasserted itself and had wiped out the physical traces of past conflicts. As the sun shone upon her fair hair, and upon the soft folds of her white gown, she looked almost as girlish as when Rabenstedt first made love to her.

"You are incorrigible," Miss Duff remarked with a laugh. "Your epitaph will be: 'Here lies Patience the Impatient, who never understood Patience.'"

"I don't believe I *have* ever understood myself," Patience replied ruefully, "and certainly I have never understood others. It makes me blush when I remember how cocksure of everything I used to be!"

"I told you you would shed your old skin," Miss Duff said, "but it is almost invariably a painful process."

There was no response from the window-seat. Patience's eyes were fixed upon a paragraph in the paper before her, and suddenly all the world glowed with a new significance. She read:

"We hear that our Conservative candidate, Captain Cunningham Roper, V. C., D. S. O., has just returned from India, where he has done some magnificent work for his country. It seems that he intends to stay at Colne for the present, in order

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to look after his property, and to nurse his constituency for the coming election."

Perhaps, after all, her life—the best part of her life—was not finished, but only just beginning?



